

# THE GERMANS



Emil Ludwig

*Germany is nothing, but every individual German is much, and yet the Germans imagine the reverse to be true.—GOETHE*



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## Foreword

THIS BOOK is intended to be a history, not of Germany, but of the Germans. Here, as in all his writings, the author's scope is psychological. Even so, a complete story cannot be encompassed within the range of a single volume—here too the artist's skill lies in his selection. There are indifferent German emperors, whose names will not be found in the pages that follow ; for the purpose is not to tire the reader's mind with as many names as possible, but to stimulate it with a smaller number of fully rounded characters. Battles and other external events resemble the zenith of a trajectory, whereas the real points of interest are where the projectile is fired and where it strikes—cause and effect. On every one of the pages that follow, it is the author's purpose to explain causes and effects of deeds and events—explain them through the German character. The German way of feeling, the cruel schism within the German soul which has remained unchanged throughout the ages—these are developed here, through two thousand years.

There is no objective writing of history outside the encyclopedia. The present version too is conditioned by personal factors. Only the admission of this fact distinguishes it from others. In all lands certain savants strike rigid poses like the Supreme Judge's on a Byzantine mosaic, and they often deceive their readers and themselves as to the extent to which their own individual destinies, fortunes and reverses influence their writings. An author who ignores his own experiences and the tendencies of the age in which he lives leads the reader astray and grows tedious into the bargain. This is true especially in times such as our own when violent partisanship sets men against each other. No historian, not even the great Plutarch, would have written exactly as he did, had he written a century earlier or later. Carlyle was deeply influenced by the French Revolution, Burckhardt by the age of Bismarck ; both were similarly influenced by deep-felt personal experiences, even when they wrote of distant times. The way in which one epoch mirrors itself in another is precisely what lends wings to author and reader.

Since my twentieth year I have depicted the German character in a dozen dramas and biographies, from Ulrich von Hutten and Grünewald,

to Goethe, Beethoven, Weber and Wagner ; and from Emperor Frederic II and King Frederic the Great to Bismarck, William and Hindenburg—always with reverence for the German spirit, but with censure for the German State. This discrepancy between State and spirit distinguishes German history from that of all other nations. It always obscures the spirit precisely when the State flourishes and vice versa. That is the subject of this new book, which seeks to go beyond the destiny of individual Germans to explain the character of the nation. It is a tragic and ironic spectacle, repeated throughout the centuries from Arminius to Hitler. It offers an answer to the question which all the world asks to-day : How is it possible for the people of Goethe, Beethoven and Kant to relapse over and over again into barbarism ? German culture was hardly ever represented by the governing classes ; it was created by the governed.

The reasons why, in this dual history, one part of the people remained almost without influence on the other, lie in the complex and nervous character of the Germans, whose development we shall here outline, from the primeval forests of Caesar to the forest of Compiègne. This history, in which intellectual and political life pursue separate courses, resembles a two-decker omnibus. The passengers on the upper level enjoy a broader view but remain without influence on the direction of the vehicle, because the driver below fails to take notice of them.

Apart from this peculiarity, it will be shown how the forms of power which have made the name of Germany so hated and feared throughout the world come from the North (later Prussia), while the forms of the spirit and of art which constitute the everlasting glory of Germany come from the South and the West. It will be shown, furthermore, why the treasures that German culture has given to the world derive wholly from commoners, while the princes and nobles have brought forth only violence. The few exceptions to this rule, so deeply rooted in the German character, are the subject of special emphasis.

Yet all the German emperors and chancellors taken together do not mean as much to the outside world as Mozart and Schubert, as Dürer and Cologne Cathedral. No German victory has impressed itself so deeply upon mankind as the invention of the art of printing. It seemed more important to the author to give a picture of the mental state of this warrior people than to describe its battles. The causes and consequences of its passion for war seemed to him more significant than the wars themselves.

And finally it will be shown that Hitler is not an adventurer cast up in

Germany by the merest chance, but a truly German phenomenon ; and that all well-intentioned efforts to make a distinction between him and the German character miss their point. His spirit enters the stage in the very first scene of this book, and if he himself is allotted but two out of eighty-two chapters, it is only to-day that this seems out of proportion ; a German history of the year 2000 is likely to concede him even less. Since this book is to be published in languages other than German, the chapters dealing with the Middle Ages have been severely cut. The author has tried a new method toward which he has been moving for some time. The reader will find celebrated historical facts merely recorded in this book, whilst inner evolutions are elaborately developed. Parliamentary resolutions, battles and redistribution of territory are of little importance to posterity as succeeding wars and events again change the newly established order.

Three things, however, are of great importance : the spiritual reasons and results of events ; the character of the persons who bring them about ; and comparisons with our present time. History is not made principally by economic forces but by the emotions of men. And, as these always remain the same, every epoch will be reflected in the persons emerging from the background of this historical picture.

Born a German, the author owes his education to a civilization represented by the genius of Beethoven and Goethe. But the German State was alien to him even in his youth, so he left it at the age of twenty-five and went to live in free Switzerland, of which he has been a citizen for many years. This book was written in California, in one of the loveliest places in the world, whilst the author lived in an atmosphere of German music and philosophy.

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EMIL LUDWIG

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# Prelude Before Dawn

*"The German runs no greater risk than to elevate himself at the expense of his neighbour; wherefore it is a good thing for his nation that the outside world took notice of it so belatedly."*

—GOETHE

## 1

FROM the wide plains a hill rises in the morning sun. Two mounted squadrons approach it from opposite sides at the same time. Their aspect is very different, one from the other.

Military cloaks, fastened by clasps over leather armour and armless tunics, flutter from the shoulders of one group of horsemen. Strands of long dark hair stray from beneath the bronze helmets fitted with rigid sidepieces. Broad swords of fair length hang from the men's sides and small bucklers are fastened on their backs but they grip their lances in their right hands, together with the reins. The horsemen of the other group have animal pelts fastened about their bodies, with stag or bison skins drawn over their heads. But beneath these skins long golden-yellow hair, often curly, escapes, seeming to take the place of helmets. The swords of these men are longer and narrower, and many carry a curved dagger besides. Their lances are long and better suited to thrusting than throwing.

Before each of these hosts rides its leader, dressed in fashion similar to his men, but richer and more colourful. Both are preceded by mounted heralds bearing insignia—the one an artful eagle-shield of bronze with the four large letters SPQR, the other a crudely painted image of an animal, probably a bull's head. A few hundred paces from the hill they halt; a messenger rides over; commands ring out in two different languages. At last the commanders disengage themselves from their troops, each taking along but ten men. Soon they meet on the crest of the hill, the leaders saluting each other without dismounting.

They are Caesar, the Roman, and Ariovistus, the Teuton. The

scene is close to the river of destiny, a bare mile west of the Rhine, in Gaul, about where Mulhouse lies to-day. It is the year 58 B.C. For two thousand years to come wars and battles will follow on each other's heels here in Alsace. But on this particular day a peaceful settlement is still being sought.

The two men, both between forty and fifty, had heard a great deal about each other. Both were in a strange country. Caesar, the Roman Proconsul, had only just come to Gaul, seeking an agreement with a conqueror who had preceded him and might be disposed to share the spoils. Ariovistus had made the westward crossing of the Rhine from the Elbe and the Oder on the pretext of aiding a distressed Gallic tribe; had then subjugated the supposedly liberated tribe, and later concluded treaties with faraway Rome. The Roman Senate had been eager to win over the unknown barbarian in the north with titles and presents, for the marauding Teutonic tribes had long spread fear and terror in Rome. But now that Caesar had come to Gaul in the name of the world power, he could not close his ears to the complaints of the displaced Aedui against the conquering Teutons.

What the two men said on that hill that morning has been accurately recorded by Caesar :

"Remember, Ariovistus," Caesar began, "all the favours you have received from me and from the Senate. We have recognized you as King, and admitted you to the rare honour of an official friend of the Roman people. Know, however, that the Aedui too are old allies of the Romans. Wage not war against the Aedui nor against their allies, but return to them their hostages, and if you cannot persuade your Teutons to retire beyond the Rhine, see to it at least that no more of them enter Gaul."<sup>1</sup>

Sitting astride his horse, Ariovistus responded to the Roman's condescending speech with an agitation that had evidently been well prepared, for Caesar says that he spoke "little about these demands but much about his own virtues," as follows :

"Not from my own impulse have I crossed the Rhine; it was the Gauls who implored me for aid! For their sake have I left my home and my clan! It was not I who began to wage war against the Gauls, but they against me! They cannot refuse me the tribute they have heretofore paid me of their own free will! All honour to the friendship of the Roman people—but if such friendship cost me my rights, then I must renounce it! True, I have led many Teutons to Gaul, but without the

<sup>1</sup> Caesar : *Bellum Gallicum*, Book I, Chapter 43.

least purpose of disturbing the country, since it was not I who attacked them—I merely defended myself ! In short, if you will, therefore, leave me in undisputed possession of my rights, I shall at my own expense help you to win all the wars that you may propose. If, on the other hand, you remain here on my own land, I shall henceforth regard you as my enemy ! Then, when I have vanquished and killed you in battle, many powerful and highly-placed Romans will rejoice—they have so confided to me through special couriers and have offered me their friendship after Caesar's death. Now you know it, Caesar, and now choose ! ”

As soon as Caesar begins to answer, an officer reports to him that enemy horsemen are approaching and hurling stones and arrows into the Roman legions. Caesar breaks off and rides back. But when the Teuton's speech spreads through the camp, the Roman soldiers grow angry. Two days later Ariovistus proposes another meeting, adding menacingly to his requests for peace that he has irrevocably set this as the last day for reaching an agreement. Caesar sends two younger officers, one of whom once enjoyed Ariovistus' hospitality. They barely arrive when they are taken and put in irons as spies.

Caesar prepares for battle, and the Teuton is disastrously beaten. According to Plutarch, 80,000 Teutons are supposed to have perished. To save himself, Ariovistus allowed his two wives and his sister to fall into enemy hands. He himself escaped across the Rhine in a boat and literally disappeared into obscurity. No one knows how the Teuton leader, who for twenty years had enjoyed the greatest fame among his people, ended his days.

This first document to show us a Teuton leader in speech and in action contains all the elements characterizing the type—protestations of innocence, threats, tactlessness and treachery. Caesar too spoke as a diplomat and turned things to his own account ; but he dealt straightforwardly, offering terms not stones. By way of contrast, what did the Teuton say ? Out of pure kindness, to help the weak, had he made the sacrifice of invading Gaul ; he had mobilized only to keep from being encircled by his evil neighbours ; foreign lands had been voluntarily ceded to him but, on the other hand, his were the rights of a conqueror. Were he to kill Caesar, the most powerful Romans would be grateful to him—indeed, they had expressly requested him, the so-called barbarian, to do so. And during his speech moved his army up, for it was he who had given orders to shoot. When the bluff did not work he grew

conciliatory, but when the intermediaries arrived, he had them put in chains.

Done in the year 58 B.C. . . . To-morrow it will be exactly two thousand years ago. Nothing has changed since then.

## 2

FIFTY YEARS earlier Marius, Caesar's uncle, had saved Rome from the Teutons. At that time all Italy had been seized with panic. These Romans, who had conquered the plains of the Po and who felt secure behind the snowcapped ramparts of the Alps, had been frightened out of their power-engendered security when reports suddenly reached them in the year 113 of a huge army of northern barbarians massed north of the Alps. Half-naked giants with the "hair of aged men"; hundreds of thousands of them, but not merely an army: they had crude tent wagons and trappings and harnessed horses—and all their womenfolk and children with them. They carried clubs and long swords; their shields were the height of a man; their front line was tied together with ropes, and when they broke loose they set up a fearsome howl, artificially reinforced by holding their shields close to their lips. And all the while the women from the massed wagon train would shout encouragement to them not to yield. They slaughtered all prisoners, and the old women—priestesses in grey linen—stabbed the garlanded victims, catching their blood in vessels and foretelling the future from their entrails.

These were the *Cimbri* and *Teutones*—the Roman equivalent of *Cimbri*, incidentally, was "Robbers"—who had left their homes in the north and east of Germany, roaming the country between the Vistula, the Oder and the Elbe, and finally advancing against the more civilized Celts. This was the "Cimbric Terror," and centuries later, when other Teutonic tribes laid Italy waste, the term remained the expression of the fear in which slowly ageing Rome held the wild tribes from the north.

Why did they come and why did they always move on again—to the Rhône, the Seine, the Po, the Ebro? Was it land they lacked in the north? Had not their forefathers lived happily there in their fashion? They came from the arid steppes of northern Germany, from the



primeval forests of Thuringia—always from the northern regions. It was not land they sought ; it was better land—and who is to blame them ! It was cold where they lived with their animal pelts, their oatmeal, their skimmed-milk cheese and their bitter beer. And when they heard the legends of lands beyond the mountains that were bathed in everlasting sunshine, where the flour was white and the wine sweet—was it not natural that they should feel impelled to wander southward ? To live a better life they had to conquer ; and in order to conquer, they trained themselves to be warriors. Perhaps it was their cold and barren country that originally made the Teutons the strongest of the warrior peoples ; at any rate, it kept their warlike spirit at high pitch. Always there was the same urge for more fertile and sunny regions, and the farther the tribes advanced—all the way to North Africa—the happier they grew, the more dissolute, the weaker. The same urge that drew their fore-runners and successors to Italy and Gaul attracted their descendants, the Prussians and other semi-Slavs, to France for two thousand years ; for there, before them, lay the garden, and behind them, at home, lay the steppe and the forest.

A century after the Teutons were annihilated by the Romans in Italy, the Romans were annihilated by the Teutons in Germany. This battle of the Teutoburg Forest (A.D. 9) was an event in itself. Its circumstances reveal the German character at its earliest period to be precisely what it is to-day.

Augustus, inclined in all things to copy and complete the work of Caesar, had set himself the conquest of Germany. Step by step he sought to fortify the Roman Empire from Lake Geneva to the Black Sea. At the same time he drew to his court a number of youthful half-savages from the trackless northern forests, somewhat as Queen Victoria on occasion adorned herself with a Hindu maharajah. One of these princes, Hermann, or Arminius in the Latin version, belonged to the rulers of the Cheruscan tribe whose abode was west of the Elbe. In Rome he endeavoured to learn what he could from his hosts, and, when he later saw them again in his own homeland, he paid court to the Roman general and with the aid of his title as a Roman knight spied upon the enemy legions. Another Teuton prince, his own cousin Segestus, likewise a guest of the Romans, sought to betray him. This was the first clash between two Teuton spies who trusted each other less than the enemy.

In the end Arminius, the Teuton, by means of wily treachery, lured the Romans into the primeval forest, where he had them led around in

circles, only to annihilate them. But his cousin betrayed the liberator to the Romans. Thereupon one Teuton in revenge abducted the other's daughter. Her father, in turn, kidnapped her from her husband, giving her to the Romans as a hostage. Arminius was embroiled in family strife and in the end murdered by his own kin. Segustus, the other Teuton prince, inveigled himself into the good graces of the Romans, as certain conquered leaders to-day truckle to their conquerors. During the triumphal procession in Rome he was permitted on the tribune as a guest, while down below his daughter was led by in chains, holding by the hand the German liberator's son, born in prison. In the course of history we shall see this dual treachery oft repeated. The tribal leaders were forever locked in struggle. Throughout the later ages German princes were in the habit of betraying their rivals to the enemy abroad ; indeed, it was only thereby that the victories of the Bourbon kings over Germany became possible. For the most part the Germans have won their wars by valour and lost them by treachery.

Like all the peoples of their time they kept slaves and were accustomed to vent their love of power upon their bondsmen. Lacking the true instinct of rulership, they lapsed into brutality toward those beneath them and submissiveness to those above them. Even in the primeval forest, the pyramid, to-day once more the model for their ideal State, formed the symbol of their society, though there was as yet no Party and no bureaucracy to insure so artful a structure as to-day. At first their leader was the mightiest warrior or the boldest huntsman—later his son or grandson. Even before they called him a king or a duke they swore solemn fealty to him, to the accompaniment of sacrifices offered under their ancient rustling oaks. These oaths had a fearful binding force. They were at the heart of their religion, for the leader at the same time represented the gods and destiny.

For this reason obedience to the leader was blind, excluding all independent thought and expressly requiring even treachery if the leader so ordered. Disgrace consisted not in killing a defenceless man, but in failing to kill someone the leader had marked for death. No one was allowed to boast of his deeds, which were always attributed to the leader. No one was allowed to return from a battle in which the leader had fallen. This loyalty unto death—a loyalty that did not shrink from crime—was the framework for the morals of those primitive times. It took the place of all law, and since there was no individual choice nor a general centre, the loosely allied tribes formed a kind of communistic society of bold warriors in which but one thing was protected—the family or clan,

which Tacitus described as being more powerful with them than the law with other peoples.

The fact that they were all warriors was the only thing that remained common to the Teutonic tribes. Their heavens were battlefields, their gods warrior-heroes, their popular assemblies army reviews. Political rule found expression solely in war command. The citizen derived his citizenship from being a warrior. The slave became a citizen when he was invested with arms. The leader's commands and punishments were supposed to be handed down to him by the gods, and, since the leader was also general and judge, he must evidently know best. Five hundred years after the poor rose against the rich in Athens, after social revolutions of every kind had rocked the empires of the Mediterranean, all the Teutonic tribes still obeyed their leaders, adhering to this custom down to our own day, almost without wavering.

On the other hand, the Teuton's every impulse was wild and unpredictable. In a single night he might lose his freedom by a turn of the dice ; he might slay his friend in a drunken stupor. When it came to battle he literally hurled himself into the fray with exultation. The utter contempt of death which amazed the peoples of antiquity so much in the Teutons resembled an intoxication such as only wild and pugnacious men develop, who know neither work nor love. Even to-day it fills a part of German youth.

### 3

THE ROMANS no more than the Franks or the Italians—indeed, not a single neighbour of the Germans—could ever trust the Germans to remain peaceable. No matter how happy their condition, their restless passion would urge them on to ever more extreme demands. The war-like Germans could no more bear an idyllic state of affairs than could Faust and his thousands of German fellow-spirits the calm heights of the mind. To enjoy achievement and the fleeting moment was denied them. What was it these irresistible conquerors lacked ?

They lacked soul, humaneness, vision. The Carthaginians and even the Romans came to colonize with fire and sword and so did the French when they forced the three ideals of the great Revolution upon the

world. But with all of them ideals played a part—a theogony or religion, philosophy or natural science, a verse, a song on the lips of the conqueror. In their footsteps followed men who guarded the treasures of the spirit. But the Teutons were barbarians not because they were unable to read, but because they lacked the wisdom of the heart, the instinct of the mind, the knowledge of nature, wisdom and humility—the heritage of the Mediterranean, the source and substance of mankind.

The inner lack of security that dwelt in the Teutonic soul even while the Teutonic body surged forward victoriously—indeed, particularly then—was not assuaged by the conquest of Europe. It grew, betraying itself in a willingness of the Teutons to accept readily whatever was offered them by the Romans, Greeks, Byzantines, whose conquerors but not superiors they were. The occasional efforts by these nomads, shunted from their wild forests to the luxuriant gardens of Sicily or the Provence, to emulate the heritage and lessons of generations were touching in their simple-mindedness. Never have they been more profoundly grasped than in Schubert's "Wanderer," who moans :—

I wander still, in pain and tears,  
And ever ask with sighing : Where ?  
A spirit voice doth answer near :  
There where thou art not, all joy is there.

Only one of the wandering tribes built up anything within the Roman Empire : the Franks, who conquered Gaul and founded France. Clovis, their chieftain, a typically Teutonic barbarian, brave, naïve and cunning, seems to have been the first constructive force among the Germans, around A.D. 500. By assimilating Teutons and Romans he laid the basis for the later Carolingian Empire. On a Christmas Day he, together with three thousand heathen Franks, was baptized with immense pomp and circumstance. What could have taken a stronger hold on the imagination of these savage people, bound neither by State nor by law, than the complete contrast of this faith ? What—a God who did not wreak vengeance, who did not send his thunderbolts in retribution ? A God who blessed and forgave ? Here were priests who lifted up instead of abasing, a court of judgment that went to the heart ! The whole structure of the ancient Teutons was shaken to the core when they were suddenly confronted with an invisible hand that banished all force. This period of transition lasted five centuries—indeed, the last mass baptism among the Frisians took place seven hundred years after the first.

THEY were brave, these German noblemen, forerunners of the Junkers. They knew how to die and they did not spare themselves. But loyalty to their leaders was confined to battle. Afterwards it was supplanted by demands for booty or for so-called fiefs which closely resembled outright property. Woe unto the leader who did not yield what the nobles demanded ! They were his swords, his lances and his daggers, and he had to stand in constant fear that these human weapons might turn against him. The history of the German kings and leaders during the Middle Ages is a story of revolt and conspiracy on the part of vassals. The reason that loyalty has always been and still is held in such high esteem by the Germans is that it is so rare, an ideal emulated by but a few. A red streak of murder and treachery ran through the history of the German noble families, and if later they grew less violent it was because there was less killing and more bargaining. The intimate memoirs of the kings are studded with complaints at the constant threats to which they so often had to yield in order to hand down their power to their sons. Indeed, the kings often showed their feelings by seeking refuge with commoners. Later the Prussian Junkers, descendants of the ancient vassals, defiantly succeeded in maintaining the subjection of all other classes down to our own days.

The lack of unity which constitutes the tragedy and at the same time the fascination of German history, this weakness which rests on the strength of German individualism, bore even at this early age the significant result that every prince provided for his own family, while few provided for the realm. Thus the new country of France was constantly divided and redivided, first by Clovis and later by his successors. This partitioning weakened the country and slowed up its attainment of national integrity.

From the welter of family feuds and partitions there emerged a valiant major-domo, who was proclaimed king. But before risking his *coup d'état*, he secured the blessings of heaven. He had inquiries made from the Bishop of Rome, who even then was styling himself Pope, as to what should be done with heedless kings who did nothing beyond accepting the gift offerings of the people. The situation was not unlike to-day

when the few remaining kings are guided like puppets by dictators and by ministers.

Pope Zachary recognized the immeasurable advantage that might accrue to his successors for a thousand years to come from an alliance with the rising world power. Zachary decided upon a reply of world-historic importance : Pepin the upstart must be anointed by the Pope.

Here we see the beginnings of the German tragedy that did so much harm to the German nation. By voluntarily submitting to ecclesiastic power, the boldest leaders of Europe renounced their power as such. This established a paradox in the field of State power—a paradox that arose from the internal contradictions within the German soul which were thus perpetuated.

For Pepin was but the first of many who, having been anointed, pronounced the lie : “ Not on behalf of any man but for Saint Peter alone have I gone out to do battle, that my sins may be forgiven.” It was a blending of self-interest and mysticism, typically German ; and with this sentimental apology for his *coup d'état* Pepin spoke straight from the heart of his people, giving them the ideal pretext to justify violence. Show the Teuton a sacred motive, let him glimpse the Saviour above his sword, and he will feel himself to be Saint Michael. Even when robbing alien peoples, he will believe his mission to be highly moral. With this psychology Pepin became the forerunner of a thousand years of highly moral German conquest. Even to-day the Germans avail themselves of God or Honour or Country as a cloak beneath which to hide the dagger.

## Book I

# *The Dream of World Dominion*

From Charlemagne to Gutenberg  
(800 - 1500)

*"I have often felt a bitter pang at the thought of the German people, so estimable as individuals and so wretched as a whole."*

— GOETHE

### 1

CHARLEMAGNE (768-814), one of the three or four rulers of stature among the Germans, was the first who envisioned a world empire—that boundless German dream that took hold of the Germans for a thousand years and that has again seized them to-day. It is this dream which time and again entices the imagination and the aspirations of the Germans to the high sea of thought, only to let them subsequently rest content with a few peoples cruelly subjugated.

Charlemagne seized primarily upon immediate objectives and thus met with more than usual success. Unwittingly, indeed against his will, he laid the fragmentary basis for German unity. Yet he always considered himself a Frank rather than a German, similar to Bismarck who, one thousand years later, always remained a Prussian.

This was possible only for a great character. The state of learning was still at a low ebb in the eighth century, and little knowledge about Charlemagne has been handed down; yet a few traits have indelibly impressed themselves upon posterity.

We see the mighty King of the Franks sitting there, learning to read. And having learned to read, trying his hand at a kind of German grammar.

While his court in Aix-la-Chapelle strutted in elegant Latin, he had ancient German legends collected and German history written. Saint Boniface and other great lords neither spoke nor dined with anyone who departed in the slightest from the Church canon ; but Charlemagne sent letters and presents to Harun-al-Rashid, not long after the Mohammedans had invaded France. If, in the course of his far-flung enterprises, he happened to have a day of leisure, he was in the habit of saying : " Let us undertake something memorable to-day, lest anyone reproach us for spending the day in idleness ! " Here we witness a sense of responsibility and prestige unheard-of in any German before him. Words such as these endure in the memory of men longer than any battle, for they are universal and their humanity encourages successive generations to emulate such a man.

Charlemagne was tall, of robust and sturdy nature. He looked out into the world with wide-open eyes. His mood was generally cheerful. He liked to speak and he spoke well—in a clear voice that lacked volume. Despite his imperious nature, all accounts agree in describing him as amiable. No one knows exactly how many children he had, but between the age of sixty and seventy he still sired a daughter and three sons. His daughters he loved so greatly that he forbade them to marry in order to keep them with him. At the same time he gave them complete freedom in love, ultimately acknowledging their natural children as his grandchildren. For years he mourned the death of one beloved wife, who lost a magic ring. At Aix-la-Chapelle he used to sit for hours beside the pond in which the ring had disappeared.

The world of Charlemagne's thoughts had a tangible beginning ; at least it was set into motion by a crisis. When he wrested Italy from the Langobards, and even more a few years later, in 781, when he revisited the country under less strenuous circumstances, he was profoundly struck by the contrast between his own and his people's lack of culture, and the monuments of the thousand-year-old culture he saw before him. Unlike the barbarians of our own day, Charlemagne recognized the intellectual superiority of a people, even though it might have succumbed to the force of arms. Nothing symbolizes the eternal German longing for the South more beautifully than the fact that this first Teutonic emperor had Italian chestnut and almond trees transplanted to his gardens in the North. But at the same time Charlemagne, who at forty had covered twelve thousand miles on horseback, threw himself with the passion of youth into the second, higher task—that of learning the vanquished people's spirit and culture.



The first thing he did was to bring half a dozen of the outstanding scholars of literature and legend from Pisa and Parma across the Alps to his own court. There he gave them princely salaries and permitted them complete intellectual freedom. A character of such stature could dare things in the social field too which at that time seemed astonishing—elevating freed men to high office, for example. He was, on the other hand, severe with the nobility, constantly sending out emissaries—always a clergyman and a secular official together—to supervise the barons on their estates, seeing to it that they did not ruin their tenants.

Charlemagne's victory over the Lombards and Bavarians had been an easy one, but it took him thirty years to conquer the Saxons, and even then he succeeded for a short interval only. With true German premonition this powerful people, literally cut up into many tribes, was to resist the Franks, and even more so, Christianity, in the name of which Charlemagne sought to conquer them. Here for the first time the two Germanys met on the field of battle, for the Saxons clung to their ancient faith with such fanaticism that they forbade the Christian faith on pain of death, while the Franks were determined to force Christ upon the Saxons with the sword. If on this occasion Charlemagne had forty-five hundred Saxons butchered at one stroke, even that was done by the conqueror in the name of the saints.

Yet this precipitated him into grave conflicts. Where were freedom and equality, the Saxons asked? Both had been promised them under the new faith. Once, when the captured Saxon duke Widukind was dining with his captor—though each at a separate table—he saw a few beggars sitting on the steps before them.

"I thought your Christ lived in the poor," he mocked at the more fortunate. "And now I am to bend down before Him whom you leave lying in the dust?" Charlemagne flushed, the chronicle adds.

He was almost sixty when he became the principal figure in a symbolic gesture of world-historical significance. In response to a call for aid on the part of the sorely pressed Pope, Charlemagne marched on Rome, throwing the Pope's enemies into confusion. There was to be a Christmas celebration for the Frankish noblemen in old St. Peter's Church—a celebration the like of which had never before been seen in times of peace or without conquest.

But suddenly, as Charlemagne rose from prayer before the altar, the Pope reached for a secreted gold crown and placed it on the Teuton's greying locks. A group of Roman knights, evidently in the secret, shouted: "Hail Charles, the Augustus, crowned by God, Emperor of

the Romans, hail !” Whereupon the Pope prostrated himself before Charlemagne, who in the words of his biographer remained silent because he was confused and taken aback. Subsequently he is supposed to have said that he would never have set foot in the church had he known what was in store for him. His political vision seems to have anticipated immediately conflicts with Byzantium. The Pope hastened to style the act solemnly “the transfer of the Roman emperorship from the Greeks to the Franks,” calling Charlemagne “the seventy-third emperor of the Fourth World Empire.” The *civitas dei* had been reborn in France.

This happened on Christmas Day of the year 800. . . . In his own way the mightiest ruler of his time, who all his life had wisely been a friend of the Church, and who had subjugated three peoples, had been content with the world in his old age. And now the German king, at prayer on his knees in St. Peter’s, quite possibly in sincere devotion, was surprised in an almost grotesque scene by a crown that meant nothing less than the symbol of world power. Had the Pope resorted to this great symbol in the full knowledge of what its consequences might be ? For five centuries to come, all the German rulers justified their Roman ambitions with Charlemagne’s coronation. What course, one may well ask, would German history have taken, had Charlemagne at this moment of surprise pushed aside the Pope’s hand and rejected the alien imperial crown, as had Caesar in the same city and in the same rôle ? Perhaps only the name would have been different. Perhaps his successors, like those of Caesar, would have cloaked their power with the name of their master and we would to-day be using a word like *Karl* instead of *Kaiser*.

And Charlemagne, the ageing conqueror ? Must not the Teuton, on the eve of this Christmas Day, have thought of his father Pepin, who had led the Pope’s horse by the halter ? In all likelihood the twelve-year-old son had been present at that scene, which surely impressed itself deeply upon his mind. For it held a warning. He himself, the greater son, had merely used the Pope, not called him in. Now he too had become the beneficiary of the Pope’s bounty—a bounty that might chafe him, and even more his successors. What was the meaning of all this ? A Teuton, crowned by the successors of the Roman emperors, indeed, made their successor himself ? Was not this the world empire of which Charlemagne had dreamed ? To him, child of fortune that he was, it had come in a dream, in prayer !

The struggle between State and spirit, the great German tragedy, had dawned. As yet the danger issued from the spirit ; for that the ideas of powerless Christianity would be translated into powerful demands

by the Church—that was still a far-distant problem. As yet both powers were united—a sinister first pact had been concluded. Could they both grow, one feeding the other, or must one conquer the other? And who would win?

The German Middle Ages give the answer.

## 2

IN THE course of the Middle Ages the struggle between the German spirit and the State was revealed in three great movements. Pope fought emperor; commoner fought nobleman; minstrel fought knight. After seven hundred years of tremendous struggle the clouds parted around the year 1500, and for a moment the sun of the spirit scattered the fog with its radiance. Like gods of antiquity, Liberty and Art appeared up in the empyrean. Then the grey curtain of clouds closed again, and not until three hundred years later was there a second glimpse of the spirit. In each of the three movements one man rose head and shoulders above the general run of important figures, his stature outlasting the welter of struggle. The minstrel was Walther von der Vogelweide; the commoner Gutenberg; and in the struggle between Church and emperors too there was but one, Frederic II of the House of Hohenstaufen, who ruled by virtue of the spirit.

The entire German Middle Ages seem like a tragedy. If in this overture the themes of the great tragic opera, later called the German Middle Ages, are anticipated, it is a minor key to which we listen for the most part. The radiant, serene or elegant themes that interrupted the contemporary struggle in other countries—these we shall hear but rarely. The German character harmonized perfectly with the problems of the Middle Ages; the inchoate strivings and mystic violence of both are closely related, and for this very reason the Germans then aspired to lead the world—and succeeded, at any rate, in leading the world's unrest. That is why they constantly hark back to the Middle Ages and, to-day again as then, seek to found their rule upon the dual elements of violence and the spirit. But the spirit has meanwhile evaporated.

In no other epoch does the dual nature of the German soul emerge more attractively than in the Middle Ages. The elements were then

not yet so sharply divided as they were later. There were still weapons on both sides and thoughts on both sides, and because of them the three-hundred-year struggle between the emperors and the Popes remained inconclusive. Both raised ideas as well as swords against each other and both revealed the secret desire of the German always to give a philosophical rationalization to his elemental urges. World dominion as aspired to by the German emperors had to be given a moral excuse ; the boundless will for expansion had to be fortified with Faustian motives. The ermine of power had to be lined with the silk of mystic thought.

These qualms of conscience even then cheated the Germans out of the simple enjoyment of their conquests. If nothing else excluded them from world dominion, it was this inner feeling of insecurity, expressed by their ready assimilation during the great migrations and in the Middle Ages by their moral justification of ambitious and avaricious purposes. The Frenchmen too had ulterior motives for the Crusades ; and the British even to-day grandiloquently call their conquests missions in the name of Christianity. But the Germans were and still are the only ones in this shadow play to believe in their own pretexts, because, more romantic than naïve, they have inherited the methods but not the serenity of the ancients. The Italian, the most natural person in the world, knows precisely when he is putting on an act ; the German is never aware of it. It is this that even to-day sets the Germans apart from Machiavelli and from Nietzsche, whose authority they are so fond of invoking. They lack inner freedom. The moral pressure under which these naturally violent people have lived since their conversion to Christianity seems to have awakened secret doubts within them.

Had the will to world dominion led the German emperors eastward, had the Pope resided on the Vistula instead of the Tiber, the Germans might have prevailed more decisively ; they might even have won out in the end. This is proved by the vast conquests in the East they actually made in those same centuries. But their nobles, like their ancestors before them, were lured from those wild and yawning lands to the South where they not only enjoyed fertility and sunshine but also sensed a serene spirit that was denied them. When the German emperors went to Rome to attain the imperial crown of world dominion, there went with them the desire for the unattainable. They felt themselves drawn to peoples who in the past, even in decadence, had shown spiritual superiority over their conquerors. But this romantic urge, instead of gaining them world power, cheated them of it.

### 3

THE DESIRE of kings for their own dynastic power, the patriarchal sense of family which the Germans share with the Jews, dissolved the empire of Charlemagne immediately upon his death. Even in his lifetime he had decided to divide it among three sons. His weak successors followed his example and executed three further partitions, one following the other.

Thus the German Reich, as this *Ostfranken* was first called around the year 1000, was partitioned off without strict regard for either race or language. For a thousand-odd years the Teutons left the choice of the king to their own princes, who arranged the succession among themselves. The German king and emperor was henceforth elected by certain princes vested with that right; thus he was at first merely a kind of life-long president of a republic composed of princes. By means of diplomacy and fortunate battles he might be able to establish the actual succession in his own dynasty. The influence of the Reichstag and the assembly of princes, that is, the influence of the individual German princes on the affairs of the Reich, constantly fluctuated for lack of a constitution.

The emperors exhausted their strength in their Roman campaigns. Since all these medieval battles in Italy bore no permanent results, we shall here consider only those personalities and problems that most clearly reflect the German character. For it was the very fact that Rome was so far away from Germany that first aroused the three Ottonians, and then the later German emperors. Even then the German, when in search of greatness, was always looking beyond his own country, for he sought and needed recognition from without. It is this fear of an inferiority that does not actually exist at all, that time and again moves the German, even to-day, to seek the approval of foreigners with loud speeches composed of a mixture of threats and reproaches. All this is not mere materialism; the German does not conquer primarily to grow rich and live at ease, but to demonstrate his superiority over others and force upon them his own irksome mode of life. Neither the individual nor the people as a whole can bear to live without an audience. Those who are not convinced of their own inner worth are always listening for signs of recognition from without.

It was this very impulse, this restless conscience of the German, that so greatly excited their hearts that the heads forgot their geography. Or did strife-torn Italy really represent a land for settlement, such as it had seemed to the wandering Teutonic tribes during the great migrations? Truly, to rule such a land required huge armed forces. Yet how could these be maintained there, since the very borders of Germany were under constant threat from the French and the Slavs? What process of logic could make a people north of the Alps desire to rule south of the Alps at a time when there were so few passes across?

Statesmen had to recognize even then that the moral protection of the Pope was meaningless unless one controlled Milan and Sicily. The emperors could not possibly have failed to recognize this fact. But they overlooked it, in order that reality might conform to their dream.

And what in the end remained of all these southern aspirations? What did even as strong a ruler as Otto the Great bring back to Germany from all his battles after his long reign? When he finally came home at the age of sixty, he had acquired some Italian territory a thousand miles away, for a short time.

Yet there was a second achievement. Down in the south he had married off his son to a Byzantine princess. The consequences were significant.

For after the death of Otto the Great, the Roman-German drama quickly rose to heights of tragedy. Upon both son and grandson Otto's fantastic heritage weighed heavily, and they were crushed by it. Both of these successors were impelled by the idea of world dominion, particularly since they both had foreign mothers who used them to advance their interests. To this romantic dream they both sacrificed the blood of their nobles, their honour, the natural demands of their country, their own personal talents, indeed their very lives. Both languished and died in the neighbourhood of Rome while still young. Otto II is the only German emperor who is entombed in the crypt of St. Peter's, an everlasting symbol of a great German yearning. A thousand German hearts are buried with him.

The dream of world dominion, blending with the universal German southward urge, endangered the young German nation at home and abroad. The great symbol was in the hands of the Pope; and, by making political capital of the romantic yearnings of the Germans, the Pope was able to gain a dominant influence over them as a whole—an influence greater than any he exerted upon other nations, including even the Italians. Thus it was in Germany, which was exposed to the strongest

pressure, that the protest and opposition existing throughout Christendom against the increasing secularization of the Church mounted to its highest pitch. Nevertheless it took five centuries before this criticism of the Church grew into the revolutionary popular movement of Luther.

The dualism, created from the blending of faith and ambition, led to a fanciful and paradoxical formulation of German power unmatched in any royal title throughout history. The German kings henceforth for more than eight hundred years called themselves "Roman Emperors of the German Nation."

What, then, was the Pope in Rome? Obviously he too was the successor of the Roman emperors, but of the Roman rather than the German nation. How could he tolerate another prince's pre-empting this honour? Why had no Frenchman or Englishman ever conceived the thought of becoming Roman Emperor of his nation? True, the Pope needed a secular patron. That he found him in Germany is explained by the fact that the Germans both threatened and flattered him. The dream of world dominion made them desire the Roman crown, and the Pope exchanged his lifetime investment for immense advantages not offered him by any people less visionary.

This was shown by the struggles of the next German dynasty of emperors, the Franks, who succeeded the Ottonians. They reached their pinnacle in Henry IV (1065-1106).

Here is another German emperor whose achievements failed to endure yet who has a secure place in history, because his power-urge was linked to an idea which now hampered, now ennobled his dramatic life. In the struggle of the German State with the spirit, the figure of this ruler was opposed by that of an able adversary.

Pope Gregory VII, son of a Roman artisan, was really named Hildebrand and regarded as of German origin. He was a man of slight stature, ugly and swarthy, and even his contemporary detractors called him the "Holy Devil." He was thirty years older than King Henry. Gifted with a radiant mind and a contempt for wealth, though by no means for women, he shrewdly handled men he despised. An ambitious plebeian, he matched his passion against the leading clergy whom he castigated for simony and immorality. Had he been born a king's son, Gregory would have been a conqueror.

Henry, who was the son of a king, was not himself a conqueror. Wavering between arrogance and fear, never quite sure of his dignity and his worth, now despotic, now moody and sensual, he was a typically German character. This tall young man with the handsome features

only roused himself when he was overtaken by a great destiny, after a stormy youth.

The new Pope thought he could easily handle a king of this kind, especially since he knew the mood of the princes, who were growing more and more independent and getting ready to depose Henry. The inborn hate of the upstart against the scion inspired him to passionate terms. Henry grew furious and made a German Church Council enjoin the Pope from the Papal Throne. The Pope replied by pronouncing his anathema against the King. Upon the Pope the injunction had no effect; upon the King the excommunication had great effects.

This situation, unique in the history of kings, ripened the nervous youth Henry into full manhood. How would it be if he were to play the penitent knight, thereby turning the embarrassment on the Pope? "Paris is worth a mass," said another king, also named Henry IV, five centuries later. In deepest winter King Henry set out for Italy to thwart his opponent by pretending penitence. For safety's sake he took along his wife and children. Gregory, who had set out for the North, retired to the fortified castle of Canossa, where lived his friend, the Countess Mathilda.

The situation bordered on the comic. Neither of the two men knew precisely whether he was still the pursuer or already the pursued. Henry, the crowned king, the handsome, twenty-six-year-old son of a German emperor, entered the snow-covered castle courtyard, evidently alone. A priest came down to receive him, and Henry begged for admission and forgiveness for a repentant sinner. According to custom he wore only a long hair shirt. He was very cold. Up in the vaulted, heated chamber sat a man who had grown up under the lowly roof of an artisan, a guest by the side of the powerful noblewoman to whom the castle belonged. He was fifty-six years old, ugly, brilliant, hungry for power, and for four years he had been Pope of the Christians.

Surely Gregory must have known at once that he must give in. A real nobleman would have ended the grotesque scene the very first hour. But Gregory savoured the spiritual defeat of his enemy to the dregs, letting him wait three days outside. He could not forgive Henry his birth, his youth and his grace. On the third day he descended into the castle yard to bestow the kiss of Judas upon the repentant sinner.

From this amazing scene in January 1077, in which two rulers fought, not over territory, but at bottom for the world's favour, the man who submitted drew victory. None of his contemporaries saw any humiliation in penitence for sins—they all had enough on their conscience as it



was. When Henry returned he found the hostile princes plotting new intrigues ; but the people were for him.

The Pope had drawn the short end of the bargain. Seven years after the day of Canossa Henry was crowned emperor in Rome. Gregory died in loneliness. Henry's life was later frittered away in a gigantic struggle with his son. But he was in the mood of a victor when he suddenly died, long after Gregory, his enemy. Here were the two most powerful men of their time struggling less for the substance of power than for the supremacy of the spirit over the State. In typical German fashion these two Germans blended their motives of world dominion with those of their missions, for here spirit and State were not each limited to one of the parties—they existed on both sides.

For decades all these forces were squandered and scattered to no purpose, as though there were no peasants and burghers in the German Reich for whose benefit the Reich had been originally contrived.

## 4

EMPEROR FREDERIC I (1152-1190) has gone down into history by his Italian name, as Barbarossa, signifying his red beard. His deeds would never have earned him this fame ; it must have been the red beard, in addition to his personal courage and his enmity against the burghers, that made this ruler a favourite of the Germans. His fame was enhanced by a lucky chance. The original emperor of the German legend was Charlemagne, asleep in the magic cave, his beard growing through the table, waiting to rise again. It was not until the nineteenth century that German nationalists substituted Barbarossa in the ancient legend.

Six times Barbarossa went to Italy with his armies. Altogether he spent fifteen years there. Like his forebears he squandered Germany's resources there without achieving anything in the end. To him too world dominion meant the Roman crown, which must be secured by control of northern Italy.

Even at that time, the chronicles report, the Germans invented many new atrocities in keeping with the harshness of the times. At the siege of Crema in 1160 Barbarossa hung baskets full of captured citizens from siege towers rolled up to the city walls, even forcing them to carry

torches at night. In matters of torture the Germans in the Middle Ages exceeded all other nations in inventiveness. The executions and banishments of the proud, independent citizens of Milan which Barbarossa ordered or at least tolerated aroused the horror of his contemporaries.

Of all his wars, even the Crusade in the course of which he was drowned in a river in Asia Minor, nothing bore fruit for German history but his notion of marrying his own son to a Norman princess ; for from this union there issued a grandson who was truly a great man—Frederic II (1212–1250).

He took over the reins as a youth. Of all German rulers he remains the noblest. He alone, between Charlemagne and Charles V, bore the traits of a great personality, the most modern of all. The secret lies in the fact that this German emperor was born and died in Sicily, that of his reign of thirty-eight years only ten were spent in Germany. In him a felicitous mixture of races uniquely blended the southern and northern characters. At moments when one is inclined to see in history but a spectacle, one is tempted, for the sake of this one bright star, to accept the German southward aspiration as an attempt of providence to resolve the German conflict.

When Frederic became Emperor, at the age of twenty-one, he began his career by breaking two vows he had given the Pope. He neither handed over Sicily, as he had promised, nor did he undertake a Crusade. When the Pope excommunicated him, Frederic did what no one before him had thought of. Instead of fighting or repenting, he mocked the Lord of Christendom. He sent copies of the Papal bull of excommunication to all the princes of Europe and simultaneously decided to save Jerusalem now that he was beyond the pale of Christendom. Frederic behaved like an oriental chessplayer rather than like a German general. He arranged for a friendly meeting with the Sultan of Egypt. Frederic spoke six languages, including Arabic, and, since he was himself half a Moor, the two rulers soon came to an agreement. Why all the fuss for two hundred years ? they asked each other in amazement. The Sultan handed over the holy places to the Emperor, retaining only the temple, even there, however, granting Christians the right to pray. With brief interruptions this arrangement held down to the year 1918. The two rulers at the same time concluded a sensible trade treaty. To discredit the Pope even further, the Emperor sent the entire clergy away from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and had a so-called secular crown placed on the altar. Then he entered and placed the crown upon his own head. Returning with a few companions, he forced the Pope to lift the ban.

It was the most successful and least bloody of all the Crusades, undertaken against the infidels by one who was less of a believer than any of them.

Germany appeared to Frederic II as a mere dependency. He went north when his son entered into a league with the other German princes against him, had him taken in chains, and later had him buried as a king. He had many more children, for he had four wives and many mistresses. The manner in which he treated them reminds one only superficially of Charlemagne. Frederic was actually much moodier and more dependent on his nerves. He might suddenly turn against a son who did something against his liking. The women too he seems often to have treated with cynicism, perhaps because he had lost his mother in childhood and had been forced to contract an early marriage. Among his sons he evidently loved those best who were handsomest.

For it was beauty this German emperor—first and last in this endeavour—sought to gather round him. And it was wisdom that ennobled him. His court, at Palermo, two hundred and fifty years before the Renaissance in Florence and Venice and Rome, was unique in the Middle Ages, entirely irradiated by his person. A true Maecenas, he capably practised what he patronized, especially writing. His book on falconry is but one example, for there are many scattered fragments from his hand. No matter what their origin, useful innovations were introduced by him—Arabic numerals, but recently brought to Europe, the first poetry of young Italy; and when he had no gold, bank notes after the model of ancient Carthage. At the same time he himself was the champion falconer, for he loved nothing more than hunting, and for this very reason the German princes begrudged his absence, for they were wont to share the pleasures of the hunt with their kings.

He had been brought up in Sicily, the witches' caldron of the nations, and had lived more closely to the sages of Islam than to the learned monks. He exhibited complete tolerance toward all religions, believing in none himself, often praising the serenity of the Mohammedans to fanatical Christians. Superstitious and fatalistic, he inclined somewhat to Islam. "Study well," he wrote to his son and successor, "that you may learn to understand much; for kings are born like other men and die like them." Yet he regarded himself as of divine descent, not because he came from the House of Hohenstaufen, but because he was a genius. This almost Voltairean spirit, who spent much effort and time in governing, still found time for everything the Occident and the Orient had to offer by way of intellect and art, collecting the one in his head, the other in his palace.

The German share in his character emerged in a lifelong friendship with a Teutonic knight from Thuringia who seems to have combined all the traits the Germans admire and therefore call "German"—wisdom and loyalty, strength and kindness. By his very nature this friend and Chancellor of Frederic must have been an opponent or at least a foil to another Minister, an Italian, who actually cheated the Emperor in the end. In those last gloomy years Frederic may have carried within himself critical thoughts about the South, at the same time revising his ideas about the North.

In accordance with his character, Frederic's features were intellectual rather than handsome, especially since he early grew bald and near-sighted. An Arab wrote of him: "He would be worth little as a slave." Perhaps that was because he was worth so much as a king. When a visitor speaks of the serpent's eyes with which Frederic occasionally regarded people, one immediately senses the truth of the report. Frederic, at any rate, was the only German emperor besides Charlemagne who rested on his own strength.

He had come without predecessor, and at the age of fifty-seven he passed away without a successor. He died in the land he loved, and lies buried in Palermo. When one enters the Cathedral from the hot sun the marble of his sarcophagus is cool to the touch.

## 5

FOR SOME eight hundred years, from the Carolingians to the Great Revolution, France experienced no real change of dynasty, for the fact that the Houses of Valois and Bourbon took turns to reign meant nothing compared to the constant crises in the German leadership. At that time the ducal houses fought each other not only at the time of royal elections; their perpetual plottings also interrupted the various reigns. Since no constitution compelled them to raise levies for the Imperial Army, their own private armies, like those of our present-day dictators, were a constant menace to the empire, against which they were likely to form various combinations. In the thirteenth century, while Germany disintegrated, France was ready to enter the scene of world affairs, precisely because it did not aspire to general world dominion, having instead consolidated its power within. Any natural jealousy of the

imperial dignity and Roman succession in the French breast was at first dispelled in contemplation of French culture. The Germans did not begin to build up their own culture until they had met with failure in the world outside. The French did not go out into the world until they had secured their own culture. In this way the two powerful neighbours did not interfere with each other for a long time. Not until now did the French too turn to Italy.

In the meantime the Teutonic Order advanced eastward, where the Slavs had utilized the German imperial pilgrimages to Rome for invasions of their own. About 1250 the Teutonic Knights conquered large parts of what later became Prussia.

The true significance of these conquests was not to become apparent until later, during the seventeenth century, when these Eastern peoples, the mixed descendants of the native and invading stock, entered upon the scene of German history. Had the German kings in the Middle Ages had the time and mood to secure themselves in their Western lands—in Burgundy or in Flanders—the German West with all its gifts might have predominated. Instead, the princes between the Elbe and the Vistula, free of any effective check from the crown, grew more and more independent, subduing the Slavonic tribes. The mixture of blood in the ensuing centuries created a people who were called Prussians, after the ancient warlike tribe of the Prussians that formed but part of their ancestry. The trading spirit of the immigrant merchants was perpetuated in the descendants just as much as the spirit of war, and thus there was formed a sober, efficient, prosaic mongrel race that necessarily grew thrifty and hard on its vast steppes, so difficult to cultivate. Later this Eastern people was to take the imaginative West of Germany by storm.

The kings had little influence upon this development in the East. Toward 1400 they began more and more to renounce world dominion and to trouble no longer about Italy and German unity but only about the power of their dynasty. The Hapsburgs led in this respect. If the name of Hapsburg resounds in the world more strongly than that of earlier dynasties, this is solely due to the length of its rule, for the Hapsburgs reigned in Germany or Austria for some six hundred years, until the last one fled Vienna after his defeat. As for the emperors the Hapsburgs supplied to Germany, they were lacking in great men, with the exception of Charles V.

The earliest merit of the Hapsburgs, when they were still counts rather than emperors, remains their greatest. Their oppressions caused

the rebellion of the Swiss. Frederic II of Hohenstaufen with his falcon eye must have recognized the strength peculiar to this people of herdsmen and peasants, for he granted and confirmed the sovereignty that was to protect them against the arrogance of the Hapsburg barons.

How quickly the splendour of a dynasty fades in the memory of men unless it is reflected in the countenances of its great members! Who in the world remembers the first Hapsburg king? That he defeated the King of Bohemia in the battle by the River March, thereby acquiring Austria, and that he died in 1291, surrounded by splendour and glory? But many have at least heard of the flat Alpine meadow above Lake Lucerne, the Rütli, where in that same year 1291 a dozen poor herdsmen and peasants met to unite against that feudal dynasty. To this day songs and plays, pictures and legends tell of the deadly courage with which these "cowboys," as the highborn knights jeeringly called them, together with the ancient Swiss towns of Zurich and Berne, battled against the mighty hosts of kings and princes. Why did all this resound throughout the world and remain unforgotten until to-day?

It was because a small nation there battled for its freedom. It was because, better than the Saxons and Frisians who also fought the kings, this little nation knew how to make decisions and how to fight. It was because here first three, then eight, finally thirteen little strips of land, sometimes comprising no more than a single Alpine valley, united. It was because this land, later called Switzerland after one of the three oldest Cantons, was the only one to establish popular government, reviving in a Europe under the heel of the princes for a thousand years the ideal of the Republic of antiquity. It was because Switzerland, one of the smallest of the German countries, was strong enough to maintain its integrity through all the storms, even taking into its federation races with other tongues—setting the world a meaningful example of how a nation can govern itself, even though it has several languages, without being dominated by a single man or race.

Thus German Switzerland set an example to France and America of how to build a democracy. Here was the sole tribe to save the honour of the other Germans, who all put up with the demands of their princes and who, despite two brief revolutions in a thousand years, both of which failed miserably, remained their masters' servants. And in the end, after a brief period of anxious freedom, they have again thrown themselves into the arms of an all-powerful leader. Yet all the while Switzerland, situated in the middle of Europe, grouped around the central mass of the St. Gotthard Alps, controlling the great passes, of

importance even in this age of tunnels and airplanes, undergoes ordeals of patience and silence which come harder to this, the only German stock with a political tradition, than the outside world realizes—for three-fourths of its inhabitants speak German. In their chasms and valleys, their towns and villages, German freedom has sought its final refuge, just as it first issued from them.

6

EVERYTHING that toward the end of the Middle Ages signified inner growth, all that even to-day constitutes German glory, came from the German burghers.

In the history of other great nations too the city-dweller was often at loggerheads with the noblemen and the king ; but in those countries the different classes shared culture among themselves, and the great periods of national art coincided with those in which the State flourished generally. In Germany these peaks almost never coincided. Whenever the Reich was strong and united it starved the spirit, and whenever it was weak the spirit thrived. The reasons were rooted in the German character, and the discrepancy had far-reaching consequences. The separation of power and spirit was rooted in the uncultured disposition of the princes and nobles—with the few exceptions which we have already named and shall continue to name. But at the same time the citizenry, excluded from political leadership, cultivated the gardens of art and scholarship, after the fashion of women and old men left at home when their men-folk are out at war. This, in turn, forfeited them their political sense, their interest in government. Sensing the contempt of the domineering Junkers, the German burgher shunned responsibility. He threw himself into gainful work, and when he had amassed enough wealth, or when as a son or grandson he had means and leisure, he went in for science or the professions, while the artists rose directly from the ranks of the artisans. A desire for freedom hardly ever emerged.

The evolution that now took form reflects the major and minor traits of the German character. The diligence of the Germans has always matched their vision. Since art and enterprise are markedly divided between northern and southern Germany, the great artists and inventors have for the most part come from the south, while the merchants and

colonizers stemmed from the north. In the north wanderlust, curiosity about foreigners, the desire to find and assimilate beauty may have had their share in urging the burghers out to trade overseas. This urge for far-away places aided the Germans in all their aspirations. To the individual mind it did as much good as it did damage to the State as a whole.

It was only in the cities that culture in Germany began to leave its charmed circle. And, curiously, the mind seemed to expand farthest in the smallest space, within the closest walls. It was the monasteries that had heretofore been the guardians of the spirit. Until the twelfth century it was they that furnished teachers and physicians; it was they who produced portraits, and hundreds of documents painstakingly copied by thousands of monks on carefully prepared parchment with conscientiously mixed ink, and adorned in colour.

In France and Italy the ruling nobility of the Middle Ages introduced culture to the courts, and thence back into the land; in Germany, there were perhaps three or four really cultured kings in the six centuries from 900 to 1500. But while visitors wondered at the low ebb to which conduct among the German nobility had sunk, they marvelled at the cities.

The cities in Germany had a harder time developing than in other countries. Ancient Teutonic habits of thought clung to the soil and could not conceive of liberty and civil rights where men did not own acres, perhaps not even a house, yet claimed the rights of free men, travelling about, marrying, building cathedrals and keeping bondsmen. When the merchants began to come into their own, the clergy, among whom there was many a keen business mind reaping rich profits, reviled them as "perfidious drunkards and bandits." Princes and nobles who lived on their inherited privileges bitterly fought the cities, which claimed and defended similar privileges. Even the kings, who needed the princes to elect their sons and to raise levies for the Roman pilgrimages, at first opposed the cities. All three Estates—knights, clerics and peasants—sensed that a new Estate was entering German history, which had heretofore been the history of the nobility, including the clergy. That entry they resisted.

But money flowed into Germany from the older countries, bringing interest and income from capital and power from its accumulation. In vain St. Thomas Aquinas declared all merchants who earned more than the barest necessities for themselves to be immoral, while another ecclesiastical teacher wrote the memorable sentence "that a merchant



could hardly be without sin." Ships and stagecoaches were the instruments that united the world, torn and tattered since the great migrations. It soon became apparent that the Germans made excellent merchants.

Later proud commercial houses arose in Frankfort, Mayence and Cologne, importing silk and spices from the East, exporting metals and furs in exchange and growing into powerful centres during the Crusades and Roman expeditions.

And yet the German merchant did not by any means accompany the king to the south. The *Fondaco de' Tedeschi* in Venice was perhaps his only office. He asked not for world dominion but for money, and the crown he sought needed to be represented only on a coin, as long as it dropped into his purse, which he called *Geldkatze*, money-cat. The historical error of the emperors, who sought fulfilment of their dream of world dominion in the south, is perhaps nowhere more strikingly illustrated than in the turn toward the north and the east which the merchants took. They recognized that the Alps formed a natural barrier, while the North Sea and the Baltic offered ready access to countries that were both markets and sources of goods. Germany's peculiar geographic situation, stretching from the vineyards of the Rhine and the chestnuts of Baden to the oatfields of the Oder, also explains the lack of a capital. The Berlin of later times was never able to rival the position that Rome and London, and, since the tenth century, even Paris, held in their respective countries.

The two powers in the Middle Ages that expanded eastward and northward were the Teutonic Order and the Hanseatic League.

The Hanseatic League of German cities required no religious pretexts for its existence. It represents one of the finest communal endeavours in German history. Among the non-German cities of the North Sea and the Baltic, including those of Sweden, Denmark and Lithuania, it was above all in London that the counting-house of the Hanseatic League wielded great power. In England the Germans had once been called "Merchants of the Emperor"; now the German "Hansards" were given special privileges. They had their own courts, and their Guild Hall was granted far-reaching privileges. England was so dependent upon Hanseatic capital that Edward III was for some time compelled to pawn the British crown with the merchants of the City of Dortmund. The League continued to flourish for two hundred years.

It was the first and—until the rise of the modern steamship lines—the only time in German history that the German spirit of enterprise ventured out into the world independently of the State without making any more

enemies than is usual with those who meet with success. The League had no patron and its own weapons were used only for defence. It was a trading company that sought to win neither souls nor territory. Yet in the cities of Hamburg, Bremen and Lübeck it had three little republics right in the German Reich—with no solemn statutes, but with a common currency, a common system of weights and measures, and common customs duties. Apart from the Swiss Confederacy, the Hanseatic League has remained the only free association of German citizens that needed neither princes nor crowns to achieve world-wide scope. Both the Swiss and the Hansards proved to the world that the Germans were sufficiently endowed by nature to govern themselves with peace and success.

But the German character could not tolerate any kind of freedom for long. In these two instances there was a response to internationalism that differed markedly from the usual German reaction. But then, the Swiss and the Hansards together made up but a bare tenth of the German people, and they have remained exceptional in Germany to this very day. Even to-day people from Zurich or Hamburg often marvel at the Prussian tone which has divided all Germany into those elements that command and those that obey. They rarely grumble about it any more, but they smile.

## 7

THE CITY was a *Burg*, a walled fort, and thus the citizens were called "burghers." Walls were to the city what armour was to the knight. How could the burghers have slept soundly without walls and towers, arms, pitch and stones ! The Emperor had no standing army nor, for the most part, money ; the princes had both, and misused them ; the high clergy kept to the safety of their own cities and castles ; and the highways were infested with knights, in large bands and small, some on forays from their castles, others impoverished bandits and highway-men. This state of affairs characterized not merely the Interregnum. The German chronicles from every part of the Reich are full of it. Amid such anarchy every merchant travelling on the highway, as well as every city, was constantly exposed to attack. To get a clear picture of conditions in Germany between 1100 and 1300, one needs only to

cast a glance at present-day Europe, where highwaymen, armed to the teeth, attack and rob their less well protected and wealthier neighbours without reason or warning.

The German cities became the birthplace of handicraft. Germans must always form groups ; and, in Freytag's words, " the whole nation is composed of many such groups." These naturally grew strongest where co-operation afforded the greatest protection—among soldiers and craftsmen. Here too, since courage was not of the essence, skill and hard work, vision and persistence distinguished the Germans. The blacksmiths and brassfounders, the workers in copper and gold, produced objects of surpassing beauty and utility, and the craftsmanship of skilled German workers is still shown to-day in the grinding of fine lenses and the accuracy of German chemical preparations. To-day their skill is harnessed to those industries that still require handwork ; but at that time they went in for art.

A powerful solidarity, nevertheless, held the classes together in the early German cities. In addition to the old merchant families who even to-day, in Roman fashion, call themselves Patricians, the city councils gradually took in craftsmen. Free city government, one of the finest chapters in German history, endured for centuries, surrendering only in our own days to an all-powerful party.

The two urban classes that faced each other—each with its own organizational pyramid—were the guilds of merchants and craftsmen respectively. The modern corporate State, so called, is but an old-fashioned imitation of these associations, then most highly developed in Germany. The craftsman might be free, as far as the prince or the bishop was concerned ; but he was bound to his fellows. The German predilection for authority and submission, which springs from ancient Teutonic habits of war service and makes Germany the ideal bureaucracy and dictatorship, demanded discipline and organization as soon as free men combined into a class.

The German burgher—merchant or craftsman—could not but feel helpless in political life, since for more than a thousand years the nobility had excluded him from any part in political leadership. The habit of obedience to authority naturally led to the desire for a leader in his own limited circle—someone to whom responsibility and guidance could be left. If he himself was only given an office in his new association, possibly with authority over a few of his colleagues, he was quite willing to acknowledge those that were placed above him. The Germans have always envisioned social life in the form of a pyramid, as exemplified

in the hierarchy of king, prince, nobility and gentry. And this now became the pattern for countless small pyramids in the rise of the medieval cities. The craftsman in his guild was content to bear the dead weight of his superiors, if only he was able to have a share in the pressing down on those beneath him. In the primeval forests the Germans had known no other occupation than to hunt and wage war, leaving the care of land and stock to their womenfolk and slaves. Now, from the very start, they learned to tolerate, even to seek, authority and submission. And in later ages they grew to love order more than freedom. The German guilds of craftsmen and merchants clung to their own customs and laws to an extent that seems ridiculous, and they stubbornly continued to uphold the warrior virtues of obedience and discipline in their civilian professions. At the same time their diligence and modesty were exemplary.

In Basle, Rudolf of Hapsburg once stopped to chat with a grimy tanner engaged in his unappetizing work. The artisan invited the sovereign to call at his home the next day at noon. To his amazement the King found his host living in a sumptuous house, where the tanner and his wife, dressed in finery, were expecting their royal visitor at a table set with silver. "If you are so rich," the King asked during the meal, "why are you engaged in such dirty work?"

"It is my work," the man replied, "that has given me this house."

At the time, in the fourteenth century, the attitude of the kings toward the rising cities had already undergone a change. In their fights with the bishops, the kings now often turned to the burghers who shared this enmity toward the episcopate. In the struggles between the princes too the cities became factors to be reckoned with; on one occasion they actually decided a royal election.

In the early days the great cities themselves produced everything their citizens required. There were then actually more cities manufacturing cloth than there are to-day. But specialization soon set in, adding to the radius of capital. Bruges in Lower Germany, the greatest international trading-centre in the West, established close contact with the large cities along the Middle Rhine. The citizens of Augsburg and Ratisbon invested their money in Tyrolean and Saxon mines. Bavarian merchants settled in Prague. Thus were the great banks of the Fuggers and Welsers founded.

The Jews were closely linked with the money interests.

Charlemagne had had a weakness for them. Even in later centuries

they were protected by German princes, so that the early relationship between Germans and Jews may be called harmonious.

But the qualities that spoke in their favour then were those they shared with the German character, and that was to be their undoing later on. Just like the Germans, they too regarded themselves as the chosen people, they too were predisposed toward assimilation, rapidly taking on the customs of those among whom they lived. They too combined imagination and curiosity with business sense and efficiency. In addition, natural instinct and skill in languages gained them success in the Orient, whence they imported treasures. When a prince sent out a Jewish trader to bring back silver daggers from Byzantium or rare furs from the Caucasus, the trader could be relied upon to return not only with the finest wares, but also with a sheaf of curious tales to be related while an especially fine piece of silk was spread out before the princess as a gift.

And then, suddenly, around the year 1090, there came the first persecutions. As soon as the German burghers discovered their own talents as business men they felt a natural jealousy of those who had long before them acquired wealth by trading. The first aspersion cast on the shrewd competitors was that they were aliens, because that was the easiest course. At the same time the initial enthusiasm for the Crusades offered a welcome pretext. When Godfrey of Bouillon issued the call to fight the enemies of Christ at home first, he kindled the flames of fanaticism with this single slogan, giving those who sought to expropriate the Jews a ready-made pretext.

The Church took no part in this. Later, when the legend of ritual murder, so called, was invented, both Pope and Emperor, otherwise bitter enemies, spoke out against it. The renewed persecutions in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were justified by the allegation that the Jews engaged in usury. Since the first persecutions the Jews had turned to moneylending, gaining certain privileges that lent themselves to usury. The reason was that since the Jews could neither own land nor belong to any guild the king had granted them certain privileges entitling them to practise usury, which went against the Christian doctrines. Even in antiquity the interest rate had risen to 50 per cent. ; now it passed 60 per cent. On the other hand, the Jews ran the risk that individual debtors might invoke the protection of the bishop to evade repayment. Thus they preferred to grant loans on houses, and through their co-religionists in other lands they soon became an international money power to which emperors and kings, princes and cities were in debt.

On a small scale, many burghers now were also in debt to the Jews. Why not set fire to the houses of the Jews, they asked themselves, thus destroying the irksome debt contracts? Such action might even constitute a good Christian deed! It was fear of such threats that drove the Jews from the country into the cities.

A little later, in 1385, when Emperor Wenceslaus was caught in the struggle between the cities and the nobility, he ordered a great plundering of the Jews in Bohemia and Southern Germany, during which all debt claims were destroyed. Nuremberg alone was enriched by two million gold marks, and other cities grew rich in the same way. The Emperor now knew on which side to find advantage.

Charles IV of Luxemburg headed the movement against the Jews. Then as to-day, the Jews' greatest enemy was a pale misanthrope and visionary, seeking to avenge his own wretched childhood and to conquer his sense of inferiority, often found in the depth of the soul of those who persecute the innocent. This time the people, responding to his call, let themselves go in unbridled licence. In Spires and Vienna many Jews preferred to burn themselves to death. Certain Rhineland cities, deeply in debt to the Jews, got together and confined hundreds of them in wooden houses on an island in the Rhine which they then put to the torch. The emperor himself presented a certain noblewoman with the house of a Strasbourg Jew.

A certain Alsatian chronicler of the time profoundly formulated the main reason for these and all later sufferings: "Their talent," he said, "is the poison that kills the Jews."

## 8

THOSE WHO regard German history as a tragic love-story in which State and spirit constantly seek and almost never attain each other will find a symbolic date in the thirteenth century—indeed, two such dates. The Interregnum, the period of greatest anarchy, is framed by two of the finest monuments of contemporary art. The foundation stones were laid for the Cologne and Strasbourg Cathedrals.

Like symbols in stone these grey towers rose. And those of Ulm, Trèves and Freiburg, of Bamberg and Naumburg, rise like beacons from the mists of the German Middle Ages in equal beauty; and if the heaven

above them is not forever blue, it is heaven none the less. The endeavour of the German soul has found a truly Faustian expression in the pointed arches of the Gothic. This architectural form came from France where it had found perhaps even more perfect expression. To us it seems that there is no nation to which Gothic art is better adapted than to the Germans ; for it is ponderous and yet soaring, dusky and musical, earth-bound and mystic—just as is the German spirit in its manifestations.

How well these early German artists mastered the art of picturing man in images of stone—saints, kings or patrons placed close to the walls, grey against grey, stone images before stone walls ! There they still stand to-day, against the walls of the Bamberg Cathedral—knights who might well have been poets and perhaps were ; princes gazing into far-away distances, perhaps to the south ; and between them the Sybil with the terribly beautiful head of an Orphic priestess or of a woman possessed. And far away, in Strasbourg, stands that other Sybil, later known by such strange names ; and then there is the princely couple of Meissen, placed against the wall of the Naumburg Cathedral.

Close by rise the most beautiful structures of all, or at least those most peculiar to the Middle Ages : the town halls in which the citizens manifested their new-found freedom. They hardly dreamed that their descendants six centuries later would still admire their handiwork. We choose as an example the splendid Town Hall of Breslau, in the shadow of which the present author spent his youth. There a dream of grace seems to rise on the solid vaulting, as though a powerful man were carrying a dainty woman across the market place. It stands free in the middle of the main square—called *Ring* in Silesia—in contrast to many another town hall, pressed into narrow streets, overshadowed by tall churches, which is unable to unfold its full beauty. The first glimpse of the Breslau hall's upper part, moreover, is a vivid one. Clay tiles shine down in red, green and white from the roof of the huge centre gable. The searching eye finds itself following the irregular lines and windows, which create a sense of freedom, colour and mood that spreads delight. Gradually the eye distinguishes the square ground-floor windows of the façade, and above them the Gothic windows of the second floor, one of them built into a graceful look-out, again off-centre. Above the large colourful sundial extends the gable masonry—delicate, like Christmas pastry. The architect's imagination spends itself in the contrast between the tall lower windows of the wings, which are in the Gothic style, and the upper ones, which lean toward the Renaissance, and in a charming corner alcove.

The whole structure is surmounted by an octagonal tower, plain and a little grumpy, looking down with the severity of a schoolmaster on all the antics below, especially on the statues of the drunken man and woman flanking the *Ratskeller*. But there is one thing that seems to please the glum tower—the curious black column facing the entrance, which once awaited the evildoers who were there publicly flogged and sometimes executed though innocent.

And from the cathedrals and market-places, from the town halls and village greens, there sounded music. The German people, who in the Middle Ages revealed themselves in buildings still frequented to-day, at the same time conquered a second art that lifted them from the obscurity of their daily life into that higher world of the spirit. German song and German poetry had then their beginnings, and, as so often in the history of the arts, the very dawn of this, their great endowment, burst into bloom of unfading beauty.

A non-German chronicler of the time of the Crusades relates that Bernhard of Clairvaux grew sad when his German companions left him, for with them song also departed. It is a brief and touching line. Seeking to recapture the strains of this old German music in the reports, letters and rhymed histories, one concludes that it belonged not to a single class but truly to the people. "They sang," says another beautiful reference, "while sowing, praying and fighting." Those companions of the French Crusader were not minstrels and poets, but simply burghers and peasants under arms, unknown soldiers. When the Emperor Lothaire sought to conquer Apulia, one of his generals who sought to dissuade him made the troops strike up a nostalgic tune that signified the homeward march, and the soldiers could no longer be persuaded to fight.

To this very day German music springs from the depths of the German heart. Almost a thousand years after those singing crusaders, whole companies of young German soldiers in the World War were seen to go over the top with songs on their lips. That the German nation has become known as a nation of warriors and musicians is readily understood from its character and history.

The Germans had led the life of hunters, risking their lives every day in the trackless Teutonic forests in pursuit of the aurochs ; theirs had been the life of warriors who did not know, or shunned, the peasant's peaceful life. Later their adventures and the rigours of their punishments had far surpassed the general level of medieval cruelty ; they had revelled in the destruction of prisoners, gloried in revenge. Must not all this have left one part of the human heart unsatisfied ? What outlet was there for



the sentiments with which we all are born ? Among the Greeks Orpheus and Arion beguiled the wild beasts of land and sea with their music ; and whenever music sounded in the Germans' ears, this warrior people too was shaken to its depths. Indeed, the Germans created their own music, and all the learned explanations that German song is derived from France and the Troubadours pale into insignificance before the fact that from it grew the German folk-song and, later on, a music the like of which the world has never heard.

For those German companions of the French Crusader were but the forerunners of all the Germans, who to-day still excel all other nations in music. They cannot do without it, and play with skill and diligence in their own homes, which is the sign of the true music-lover. Not even among Bohemians and Hungarians is music fed from such rich springs into so many thousand channels as among the Southern Germans, then as now. Here we are able to see right down to the roots of the German character.

Their history has made the Germans a nation of warriors and musicians. Their military discipline, their passion for commanding and obeying, their Spartan training and frugal life, suddenly flaring into excess and drunkenness—the compulsion to which an entire nation surrendered with such true passion was bound to seek some social outlet, an activity where all that dropped away. Mars relieved by Cupid of his arms, as painted by the great Italians, is a symbol for this need. Yet it was not the rulers who fled from their world of brute force into that of art. It was the people who created enduring works—works that were at their best when the confusion all around was greatest.

Whither else could the German burgher have fled—into what form of the spirit could he have escaped from the all-powerful State ? In other lands commoners at an early stage began to take part and distinguish themselves in public affairs ; but in Germany participation in government was denied the burgher, who was kept in order or in disorder, as the case might be, by princes and nobles, clerical and secular. Not only in the Middle Ages but down to the nineteenth century the best brains were excluded from the management of public affairs. The talented and cultured citizen turned to business or intellectual pursuits, and in his leisure hours at night he took up a book or violin. His son became a physician ; the son of a craftsman, a painter ; and the minstrel, who had no sons, or at best illegitimate ones, pursued his playful and tuneful path between the respectable classes, tempting them to try their own hand at singing and versifying.

All the forces that brought the Germans so much trouble when they directed their vision to far-off things and world dominion brought them happiness when they concentrated on music and intellectual endeavour. These flights of fancy from the thralldom of a life of violence have brought forth a wealth of stories about spooks and magic, glimpses into the nether realm which the Germans are so fond of mentioning in their farces and sacred plays.

With part of the people giving themselves up to discoveries in the world of art and intellect, the gap separating them from those who directed the country's destinies grew even wider. The commoners resigned themselves to the leadership of the nobility and held more and more aloof from politics. The nobility in turn, filled with contempt for this other world it found so incomprehensible, was less and less concerned with matters of the mind. This growing discord in the German character, as expressed in social life, led to a schism, the full force of which is making itself felt to this day.

What we here and hereinafter call the German sense for music is merely a collective term for the immortal works the Germans have offered the world : for all their great art—the Cologne Cathedral, the visions of Grünewald, Goethe's poems—are musical in an elemental way. Here we are confronted with the greatness that marks their personality—the reverse side of their nebulous drifting character. Across the ages and peoples, their mastery of music offers the purest revelation of their rich endowment.

## 9

THE POETS and minstrels who enlivened the German Middle Ages, in addition to the architects and creative artisans, were of a worldly mind, loving "Vanity Fair." The Church turned against them ; bishops spoke of buffoons and courtesans when they meant poets and singers ; and an abbot of St. Gall who wrote love songs was already reckoned half a heretic.

At first it was only the knights in their castles, constituting the society of the time, who kept singers and poets in addition to their pages, falconers and mistresses. How else were they to dispel the tedium of winter ? Between one raid and the next they sat in their gloomy castle halls, grimy with the soot from the pine torches and smoky fireplaces,

glad at last to be rid of the crushing weight of their armour. For the hundredth time they related their deeds of valour to each other—how many raven-haired maidens they had ravished in the Holy Land. The women sat farther down in their smaller chamber—for not even the mistress of the manor was asked to sit at the table in honour of a new guest, and the men for the most part kept to themselves.

The strange contradictions of the German character assigned to the women of the age of chivalry a position midway between slave and goddess. In France at this time women were already sitting with the men at meals, even then paired off and in all likelihood at the small tables at which they are still seen in every French *bistro*—or were until yesterday. They sat and sipped from the same cup with their squires, cutting their meat for them in turn. But in the German castles women were chattels of the knight, handed over—one might even say, sold—by their fathers after prolonged haggling. Often they were of extremely tender age—Kriemhild was but fifteen when she married—yet their welfare depended on whether they bore healthy sons or merely daughters. “In durance vile,” as the law put it, the husband might sell and even kill them. That this is documented down into the fifteenth century throws a significant light on German history, as does the fact that the Frisians offered human sacrifices into the thirteenth century.

Yet at court and at the tournament these same women, who had neither freedom nor property nor any rights over their children, were placed in the seat of honour. Homage was paid them, and after the French fashion their silk ribands became the champions’ prize; their signal for mercy was the law of the court; above all, their clothes became the centre of attraction for the spectators and the poets too; epics and chronicles are full of long descriptions of their cloaks and hats; even the manner of their smile was noted.

Although girls were exclusively destined for marriage, their abduction and even their love hardly ever became subjects for song. The knight’s desire turned solely to the wives of other knights, yet these seem to have strictly upheld the honour of their homes and the ideal of monogamy. When *Minne*, as this higher form of love was called, was introduced to give a higher content to their crude warrior and robber lives, it soon became the great fashion, with far-reaching effects on the national life. It reached the convents and monasteries too—and if nuns and monks read Juvenal and Ovid, even in each other’s company, to the dismay of aged bishops, how much more colourfully could castles and palaces dispose of love! It was always the physical possession of the lady to

which the knight aspired, and she knew with great guile how to take advantage of her handicap as the wife of another as long as her womanly instinct told her it was possible. Often she spent years accepting the worship due to a remote goddess, all the while sleeping by the side of her husband, who in turn might be worshipping at another altar. There were far fewer examples in Germany in those years of husbands doing away with their wives and their wives' lovers than in more southerly lands. This was the only form of killing, however, in which the Germans lagged behind other nations.

## 10

IT WAS about this time and under such social and linguistic conditions that the two great and thrilling epics of Germany were written—poems in whose intense power this first epoch of German art was lifted to the heights of a national document.

The *Nibelungenlied* spreads its wings farthest in time, since it was created between the sixth and fifteenth centuries. This epic, rightly regarded as the national poem of the Germans, reveals their soul in all its sinister savagery, without pretence or apology. Here their passions—cruelty and vengeance—rise to demoniac proportions, and since they recur with gods as with men, they can only be looked upon as symbols. The difference between the Northern Seas, forests and steppes and the fertile countryside of the south, the spiritual contrast between North Sea and Mediterranean, become clear when one compares the *Nibelungenlied* with the *Iliad*, from a purely human rather than æsthetic point of view. Such a comparison does full justice to the basic paganism which they both share. Homer, two thousand years the senior, ought to appear closer to the elements, farther removed from culture, his characters of greater savagery.

Yet what a contrast, when one compares Achilles, Ulysses and Penelope with Siegfried, Hagen and Brunhild ! Murder and guile are amply used by the Greeks, but they are used to defend love, loyalty, freedom. The *Nibelungenlied*, on the contrary, might be called the glorification of perfidy, for it is this, together with the German passion for revenge, that impels its heroes. The cunning and the vengefulness exhibited by these men and especially by their womenfolk ; how friends and spouses break the vows they have sworn, betraying each other on the very bridal

night ; how liegeman breaks faith with his lord, not for the sake of love, liberty and home, but for a golden treasure over whose loss everything crumbles into ruins in the end—all this sets the basic spirit of the *Nibelungenlied* apart not only from the Greek, but also from the Anglo-French spirit, which at this same time was turning to the Holy Grail for its national epics. Whoever seeks to grasp the deep passions that to-day again flame in the Germans should study the *Nibelungenlied* in the original, or at least consult an adequate summary of the original, rather than the distortions of the Wagnerian operas which are virtually the only versions known abroad to-day.

The three great poets of the Middle Ages, Wolfram von Eschenbach, Gottfried of Strasbourg, and Walther von der Vogelweide, thrice confirm throughout the epoch of their activity the social law of the German spirit. They all flourished while the Reich disintegrated ; they all came from the south of Germany ; and they all were commoners, or knights so impoverished that they had to make their way as minstrels.

And yet there was one great exception—a Court of the Muses in the very heart of Germany, with a prince who played sponsor to the spirit. That was the landgrave Herman of Thuringia who resided in the Wartburg. Except for the Court of Vienna it was only here in Saxony, later the home of great musicians, that the honour of the German princes was saved. Three times this happened—around 1200, around 1500, and finally around 1800 ; for it was here in the Wartburg or at least close by that Luther and Goethe found princely protectors. That the German Republic in the year 1919 removed its parliament to Weimar had a profound symbolic meaning.

The poetry that later came into being in the medieval cities was far inferior. The craftsmen were to give rise to great painters and sculptors, but as poets they lagged behind. The mastersingers of Nuremberg and Augsburg, who rose from the crafts to special schools of song, have left behind nothing to enter into the heart of the nation—not even Hans Sachs, the shoemaker, six thousand of whose poems have disappeared altogether.

Indeed, neither the carnival plays nor the craftsmen's farces, nor the great epics, live on among the people—only the songs, beginning with Walther von der Vogelweide.

The minstrel was the musician whom the people put up against the singers at the courts. A few, of course, passed from one estate to the other. For this reason the minstrel's position was full of curious contradictions, similar to that of the women for whom he sang. Was he a

ne'er-do-well or a messenger of the gods? In Worms the burghers were forbidden to take him into their homes; elsewhere he was lumped together with other suspicious characters, such as jugglers, dancers and animal trainers.

The source of this attitude lay in the people themselves rather than in the cities. The minstrel was essentially a wayfarer on the highway, visiting a village inn, the courtyard of a castle, a dance in the market-place. The first great poet produced by the Germans could play the fiddle and clash the cymbals. Only a faint inkling of the sweetness and freshness in the poetry of Walther von der Vogelweide can be conveyed to those unfamiliar with the German tongue, for even Germans to-day can grasp this ancient dialect only with difficulty.

Walther, the first German poet and musician of real stature, was an Austrian, born in the Tyrol about 1170; for a short while he was at the court of Vienna; then he took to the highway. In truth we know nothing about him except what he tells of himself in his songs. We do know, however, that the decisive turn did not come until he had forsaken the court for the highway. Like Goethe, Walther followed the French fashion for only a few years, shining in sparkling verses before finding his mother tongue. But the well-springs opened up to him, and they are still open to us, as in the pristine freshness of Goethe's youthful songs.

Walther's name grew notorious as well as famous for the manful attitude he took as a political poet. He wrote about the flight of peace from the highways; everywhere in nature order prevailed—but not in Germany; the Pope he called a servant of Satan.

Only late in life, when he had grown grey on the highways, exhausted by the factional struggles, did he find a patron. He had written, now for this, now for that rival king, whichever was to his advantage, for, in the end, Walther was a German. But later, Frederic II granted him a small homestead, as Augustus had once done with Horace. In all likelihood the King did not even know Walther; but a young knight, a companion in falconry, may have sung him Walther's song of the Falcon and the Beloved, adding that the poet was eking out his wretched life on the highways. The Emperor, after all, was himself a poet, and between the two cups of wine he told the Chancellor that the singer in the north must be aided. It is a wondrous moment in German history, and we grasp it more profoundly than the two men did then—to see the greatest King of the Middle Ages with a flourish of his pen presenting to the greatest singer of his time, far from his court, a house, a garden, a little piece of ground.

## 11

THE MISTS are lifting. Through the shifting, heavy clouds in which men and forces of the German Middle Ages grope a light shines in the distance. Is it the dawn of a new day? It is the morning star that speeds it on its way.

From very different sources—from mystics who sought to sense and divine rather than to know, from heretics who sought to know and comprehend rather than merely to pray—there arose in the fifteenth century the cry for universal knowledge, for a learning that should not remain the secret prerogative of the priests. The German language prevailed in letters and in law, and it spread widely. The burghers and peasants wanted more than the Church had given them—knowledge, an understanding of God and the world—and this vision of democracy pervaded the town halls under their mighty towers, the gloomy halls of the universities. Hitherto all knowledge had been confined to the copies laboriously made by the monks, and how few they were! The time was ripe for invention. As early as 1400 pictures had been cut in wood and metal, and pressings or printings had been made of them. What was needed was the inspiration to cast movable type quickly and cheaply. In those days a young man in Strasbourg was trying to answer this question.

Born about 1400 in Mayence, Johannes Gensfleisch, called Gutenberg, had emigrated with his father. He was not of the gentry, as has been asserted, but the son of a burgher, a member of the goldsmiths' guild, for he was a gem cutter. He began to make mirrors, and while mounting them in metal frames with the help of a press, he conceived the idea of using a similar press to hold individual types, joined in words, sentences and pages, which might then be printed.

Lack of money drove him, like most inventors, on his way. He returned to his home town, where he found a certain Fust, who has impressed himself upon history through no merit of his own. He was the type of avaricious and unimaginative financial backer who even to-day exploits the genius of artists and inventors, becoming the master of those whose shoelaces he is unworthy to loosen. Soon afterward the banker sued the genius—just as still happens to-day—because the debtor's work had not progressed sufficiently. Fust won in court, though he

himself was guilty of having defaulted on promised payments. The judge assigned Gutenberg's type to him, and but for the intercession of a priest in Mayence, the inventor might have perished.

For it was none other than the Church that first grasped the meaning of this most dangerous of all modern inventions—the same Church that should have destroyed it, burning the inventor together with his type ! Did it not sense the diabolical spirit that dwelt in these little letters, these wooden frames, this black ink ? Instead it became the first client of the new art. The first documents printed by the creator of the new light were those of the dark ages—letters of indulgence, in which the Church forgave the faithful their sins, for money. As in the fairy tale, it was a remote and legendary prince, the King of Cyprus, who was at the time rallying the faithful against the infidel Turks, so that he might save his inherited isle. To finance this war, the Pope had indulgences distributed throughout all the countries by his agents. The German agent found it useful to have the papers printed instead of written, for in this manner a few hours sufficed to broadcast a hundredfold that all souls were released from their sins for the years from 1452 to 1455—if they paid well.

Gutenberg, then about sixty and all his life a bachelor because he gave all his time to inventions, had been called to the Archbishop of Nassau. He could now set about completing what he had long begun : the printing of a German Bible.

Those who have handled this first forty-two-line Bible of 1455 (it is too heavy to be lifted and must be inspected on a lectern) marvel that instead of a first clumsy effort like the first steam engine or the first automobile they are face to face with a work that is perfect. Centuries of monastery practice in miniature are solemnly transferred to the initials on the printed page. This was precisely the problem facing the type cutter and foundry—how to combine beauty and utility.

But while the invention of this German was conferring upon the world a boon, another menaced the world with his idea.

As early as 1340, gunpowder had been produced in Germany. Clumsy blunderbusses too had been made, with bullets of stone and iron. The English won a battle with firearms, but they could not really shoot, winning merely by the sound of their guns. The invention has been attributed to a German monk, Berthold Schwarz. He is supposed to have ground a mixture of saltpetre, sulphur and charcoal in a mortar, whereupon the mortar exploded. Perhaps he was an alchemist whose avarice the Devil sought to cure in this manner, without betraying how much of the Devil the powder itself held. But, in the legend, the monk grasped



the significance quickly and well, like his successor Nobel many years later, as peaceful a man as the monk. Around 1400, at any rate, other unknown inventors in Germany had built cannon and also small arms of bronze, loaded with bullets of lead—for a manuscript dated 1405, now in Göttingen, pictures them. Soon afterwards a Frankish nobleman, in a work entitled *Bellipherus, the Sturdy Warrior*, founded the literature of firearms. The fifteenth century was not yet over when the Germans had invented the lateral touch-pan, the matchlock, rifled barrels (in Vienna), the flintlock (in Nuremberg). A hundred years later the snap-hance-lock was constructed by German gunsmiths.

Thus the Germans, at about the same time, dropped two decisive inventions into the swirl of world events, in an epoch of general crisis and change like that of to-day. Here were two manifestations of the German character, directed to the two aspects toward which it aspired. Savagery, revenge and lust for destruction drove the German to find a terrible means for attack. Thirst for knowledge, aspiration and common sense led him to the printed book. The new weapons of war and of the spirit issued from German hands at the same time.

They were soon to clash.

## Book II

# *Struggle for the Creed*

From Luther to Kepler

(1500 - 1650)

*"There is only one interesting thing about the Reformation and that is Luther's character. That is what people admire. All the rest is but a muddle that is still worrying us daily."*

—GOETHE

### 1

IN a smoky vaulted study, amid colourful retorts and bellied flasks, amid globes and charts and skeletons, sits a bearded man in a grey cloak, the hair over his noble brow dishevelled. Restlessly he turns the pages of the folio before him on the lectern. None can say whether he is young or old, and when he glances about searchingly, his eyes flash and darken in turn. The powerful figure rises, and as he paces to and fro with long strides, now halting sharply, chin resting in his hand, then again looking around as though seeking a way out of his dungeon, he resembles nothing more than a madman.

And that is what he is; for between him and his natural desires, between this room of profound meditation and the flower of gardens and womanhood, of songs and struggles, of power and intoxication, there hovers the everlasting quest for the higher meaning that leads to God and the secrets of life. Two souls are at war within the philosopher, and with every change of mood, from desire to renunciation and back again, he hurls himself into the teeming multitudes or hastens back into this vault, always with the same violence, his unquenchable yearnings cheating him of the happiness that springs from equipoise.

For he is a magician and a seer, and his vision is of the eternal.

disciple, a believer and a doubter, searching the world and dissecting himself, the eternal analyst who never attains synthesis. He is the ever-questioning German, never resting, forever soaring like the pointed Gothic arch and never sufficient unto himself. His is the spirit to which the music of the spheres reveals itself, though it never enters into his heart. Yea, it is Faust, the great symbol of the German soul, the living witness of why that soul never finds peace.

But Faust is no mythical character ; he is a historical personage, a physician and physicist, an alchemist and soothsayer. He was born about 1470 in Swabia ; in Würzburg he is supposed to have demonstrated the miracles of Christ, while in Wittenberg he is said to have boasted that the emperor's most recent victories in Italy had been the work of his magic. Forty years after his death this German magician was already evoked on the English stage by Marlowe. Long before Goethe's time the legend of Faust had carried into the world a picture of the German soul such as no one had ever given before or has given since, except for Beethoven. Gothic cathedrals and profound thinkers are found in other lands also ; neither of these two expressions of the spirit is confined to Germany. Thus neither the Strasbourg Cathedral nor Kant, nor even Bach and Goethe, have so tangibly represented the unique nature of the German character. No German emperor, prophet or artist has impressed his character so deeply upon the conscience of the world ; for even the figure of Luther never became legendary. To the outside world Frederic the Great and Bismarck merely represent national figures ; they could never become the common property of all mankind. Why, then, did this magician who pledged his soul to the Devil conquer the world, in the unmistakable rôle of a German genius ?

Because he combined the elements of the German spirit : aspiration, doubt, faith in miracles, and—one might almost say—a romantic streak. This longing for the infinite, which yet never became pure faith ; this flight from logic and clarity into the mystical and unknowable—they are the same forces of brooding and exorcism that find their external expression in the German dream of world dominion, as inwardly they turn to music.

This was the time of the great revolt against faith. Doubt and at the same time the unquenchable thirst to fathom the mystery of God impelled Faust to stake the salvation of his soul.

His desire to equal God, to fathom the secrets of Nature, surrendered him to the Devil, that is, to destruction. Even the oldest books about Faust say so. And even in the ancient versions Faust dies with this

magnificent confession : " I die a bad Christian and a good one." Quite similarly Luther wrote in his testament : " Known in Heaven, on Earth, and in Hell." Two hundred years later the young Goethe called himself " good and evil, like Nature."

The bold and passionate avowal of the duality of life, recurring in the three great Germans, almost down to the same choice of words, holds the genius and tragedy of the Germans.

All this unfolded in the bright daylight of humanism. Dr. Faustus was a contemporary of Luther and Erasmus—indeed, legend even has them meet. All three were quite familiar with the Devil, whom they fought by diverse means, by faith and by knowledge—Erasmus alone managing to escape into a peculiar type of harmony.

A long series of German spirits before and after Faust pursued similar paths ; Faust, one might say, stands midway between the mystics and the witches.

Among the mystics that go back into the thirteenth century, Master Eckhart in Strasbourg was most effective as a preacher who spoke less of the Church and of good works than of the deep ecstasy of faith. The imaginative Germans were in their element when immersed in the sea of mysticism. But there were excesses, for only a few were capable of Eckhart's profound meditation. Thousands wandered through the land demonstrating their piety to themselves by flagellation. From these excesses it was but a little step to the dancing mania along the Rhine, where men and women had themselves trampled underfoot.

How close heathen and Christian customs still were ! Deep into the Middle Ages human sacrifices were still customary among the Nordic Germans. The worship of holy stones, the consultation of the birds and the moon, readily slipped into the superstitious belief in the miraculous properties of the arms and legs of saints, enshrined in the churches. Once elves and spirits had flown through the air ; now women possessed rode brooms or rams to the Witches' Sabbath ; or a beheaded saint, carrying his head under his arm, walked through the night to show where he wanted his church erected. From the days of the ancient Teutons the Germans have had a deep feeling for Nature, and even to-day this distinguishes them from other peoples. This feeling was revealed in music and song, and also in the taming of birds and deer. An ancient oak might still be worshipped a thousand years after another close by had been cut down to make a cross.

These elements of asceticism, ecstasy and mysticism gave rise to the

burning of witches. They seemed to flare up with the sunlight of enlightenment and did not reach their climax until after 1600. This, perhaps, was the most sinister of all German passions. With the same courage that to-day again distinguishes a few clergymen among the enslaved nations, a few men rose up in opposition, always in danger of their very lives in the face of the threatening Inquisition—men like Agrippa, Weyer, Spee ; a humanist, a physician and a Jesuit, whose fame ought to be restored to-day. They all came from the west of Germany.

The excesses Charlemagne had enjoined in the ninth and Gregory VII in the eleventh century flared up in Germany as late as the seventeenth, and more horribly than ever. To-day one can only speak of sadism on reading *The Witches' Hammer*, written by two Dominican monks, upon whose authority cruel and lustful judges and hangmen liked to base their judgments. It was a book of obscene descriptions of how the Devil committed venery with women, and how torture could be used to compel women to confess such crimes. Plagues and diseases were supposed to arise from such intercourse, and in the end every woman, when on the rack, confessed crimes she had not committed, naming still others who were innocent. Since neither prince nor jurist nor even the people themselves rose up against these witches' courts, they must be reckoned an accepted form of popular justice.

Was it not but a step from the ancient Teutonic priestesses, who were enchantresses, to these women possessed of the Devil ? The nation that continued to offer human sacrifices longer than any other white nation merely changed the terminology and continued sacrificing its witches. A deep-rooted love of the horrible, so the chroniclers report, carried away the crowds. It did not affect the clergy ; in Cologne, for example, even heretics were granted the right to debate. From 1593 to 1597 in Trèves alone no less than 306 witches were burned to death within five years—a number unmatched anywhere in Europe and indicating that cruelty was a national characteristic springing from two thousand years of practice in warfare as a passion. The torn and charred bodies of innocent women were left at the stake not merely as a means of terror—for to-morrow almost anyone might be seized. They were the trophies the people liked to see. Just so the Romans had crowded into the Circus to see whether the condemned man would die bravely or cravenly under the claws of the wild beasts.

The hysteria and mob spirit among the people rose to such a pitch that neither reason nor faith nor dignity was able to prevail. Always distrusting logic and liberty, the Germans welcome every source of

ecstasy, whether it be cruelty or music. Thus Faustus, half scholar, half magician, lived among them, in constant danger of being burned to death because he seemed too clever to them. Thus lived Albertus Magnus before him, and Paracelsus, his contemporary—both of them *doctores universales*, their knowledge ranging from the loadstone and the hygiene of eating oysters to mountain water and its influence on the glands of Alpine peoples, from the swan song to the most modern dream analysis—for, seven hundred years before Freud, Albertus explained why people dream of shapes and colours but never of smells.

## 2

FOR EVERY hundred pyres kindled for the witches there was but one for heretics. The witches died for slandered innocence ; the heretics for a conviction they refused to recant. Since to-day both kinds of pyre lick the German skies once more, it is important to examine the motives that impelled the forebears of our present-day heroes to judgment and sacrifice.

Why did the first reformers rise in Germany, of all places ? The character and the history of the Germans decided this problem, the promise and doom of which were to overshadow the ensuing centuries. The heritage of the German Middle Ages : paradoxical dependence of the Reich upon Rome, the dream of German world dominion, borne up by the vision of the people, had given the Church such power that there was bound to be a reaction. German disunity was another reason, for unlike England there was no united nation to rise against the secular claims of ecclesiastic power. The contrast with France was even greater, for in France politics and religion had long since joined hands, and in addition the influence of the court upon the Popes at Avignon was a determining factor.

While the Latin peoples tackled the secularization of the Church with reason, the German character did so with passion, emotion and conscience. Italy was then called the *sacerdotium*, Germany the *imperium*, France the *studium*. If one dare formulate from the sparse samples we call documents the general spirit of the people, the Germans seem to have been more deeply stirred than other nations in their faith as in all other emotions, to have been more inclined to brooding and to analyze their

brooding. Possessed of less feeling for form than the Latins, they were the first to grow restless over the turbid contents that filled the traditional ecclesiastic forms. Less well-balanced and tolerant than others, their character was impelled to rebellion by influences from every side—a rebellion, to be sure, that never left the sphere of the spirit.

The advent of *Piccolomini* in Rome, the dawn of a brilliant age in which Alexander Borgia, Julius II and Leo Medici opened the doors to all the glories of the Renaissance, failed to fire the German mind. The Germans distrusted the splendour of the Papal art patrons; they fought against the realization of their own dreams when these began to rise from the Vatican, minus crowns and German emperors. They preferred to turn to the sinister Savonarola, and they felt deeply wounded when he and Giordano Bruno were burned at the stake. A zealous, believing Church they would have resisted as little as they later resisted the Jesuits. But a Pope who had his mistress painted as the Madonna, who made his son a general and married off his daughter as a political pawn—such a Roman carnival was blasphemy to German ears, even if it was out of sight, and could not be accepted without resentment and indignation.

This was because of the gold that Rome abstracted from Germany; because of the beauty that Rome unfolded in heathen fashion; because of the scandal among the German princes of the Church when the Bishop of Liège, a certain Count of Guelderland, boasted of having begotten fourteen boys in twenty-two months; but perhaps the deepest reason for the indignation of the Germans was the bitter disillusion brought upon them by the rich and lovely South, wooed for seven centuries, when it became apparent that the dream of world dominion had been shattered forever. The rise of the cities and the decline of the knights, above all the invention of Gutenberg—all these had made the nation more and more independent, to the point where it now turned to Bible and sacred song on its own, accustoming itself to see that the splendour of the bishops had nothing to do with the faith. What the Waldenses and the so-called "Brothers of the Common Life" had so long cultivated became common property now that one could purchase at least sections of the Bible, even if one was not rich.

Thus the true mood of the people harked back to the principles of primitive Christianity; there were many priests who taught them, in opposition to the Pope. John Huss was the most famous among them.

What Huss (1369-1415), a Czech, professor in Prague, taught was no different from the reforms demanded everywhere in Germany and England—abolition of indulgences and auricular confession, of relic

worship and idolatry ; and chastity and poverty for the clergy. (The celibacy of the priesthood, originally demanded by but a few ascetics, had become customary, though not obligatory by canon law, as early as the tenth century.) The Czechs made Huss's preaching a national doctrine ; there were riots at the University of Prague ; waves of people carried the movement afield ; the German students wandered to Erfurt and Leipzig. There followed excommunication by the Pope, and Prague was placed under an interdict. Finally Huss was summoned before a Council of the Church to defend himself.

This Council of Constance (1414-1418) was an event of world importance, for it came into being against the wishes of the last Pope and signified the end of the schism into which the Church had fallen upon the return of the Pope from Avignon. When the Council insisted that Huss, in addition to the Bible, should acknowledge the canon books and Papal decisions as dogma, he refused. He had come voluntarily, the Emperor having given him assurances of safe-conduct. Now no one came to his aid. He was burned at the stake.

The consequences were disastrous ! A revolution, a civil war between German provinces, broke out, lasting seventeen years. It was a war of gangs and a war of Crusaders—for that is what the German gentlemen called themselves in this fight against the infidels. They received orders to kill all except children in Bohemia—all in the name of the same Saviour whose cross both sects carried in the van. It was at the same time a war between classes, for the Bohemian peasants demanded a kind of communistic State.

But the spirit of revolt among the people only burst into higher flame. The day was past when everything was stolidly accepted. The Chancellor of one progressive archbishopric formulated the sins of the Popes in an open letter, sixty years before Luther.

In the midst of the ominous rumble of the Reformation, both powers, Pope and Emperor, felt strong and capable. Maximilian (1493-1519), the new Emperor, was set apart from all other German emperors by his sense of freedom and humour, his plans and notions, the versatility and elegance of his mind. He seemed to have inherited nothing from his Hapsburg father, everything from his Portuguese mother. This strain reached beyond his own life into that of his grandson, the great Charles V.

As a youth he looks soft and dreamy, like a prince who writes poetry. In his old age, in the famous portrait by Dürer, he might be taken for an old councillor whose disappointments in mankind have confirmed



him in the pleasures of nature and art. He was called the "Last Knight," which characterizes but one aspect of his nature. For he was a man of ideas too. Maximilian lacked the blue background of the sky to realize his fancies—the sky that had smiled upon Frederic II of Hohenstaufen. He was happy, not in the gardens of Palermo or falconing, but in the mountain chasms of Tyrol; not in the circle of artists and thinkers, but on lonely ridges on the trail of the chamois. He wove into German history an independent personality, combining vision and energy, without allowing the former to degenerate into madness or the latter into savagery. One loves him for the sake of his portrait.

This eccentric on the throne was known mostly for his popular traits—his love of the dance and the hunt, his understanding of music, merriment and wine, his tolerance, practised wherever possible, his predilection for men of spirit, and, of course, his constant and appealing lack of money. "The most learned and educated men really ought to rule," this prince once dared to say, and he respectfully sought out the company of the humanists, to quench his thirst for learning. The question of Church reform put him in a thoughtful mood, and he once submitted eight questions to a famous abbot, one of which asked whether it was possible to attain divine grace through some other faith, if only one worshipped God. The horrified cleric asked for three months to think this over, while the King laughed. A highly talented dilettante, he rarely did things at the right time. He was likely to take offence and suddenly walk out of the Reichstag in order to hunt in the mountains. Between battles he wrote poems, and occasionally he would fly into such towering rages that he would grow incoherent. Like all men of importance he loved glory, but he remained free of all affectation, and often dressed in a slovenly fashion. He liked to have verses dedicated to himself, had Dürer draw him a triumphal procession, and in Innsbruck he built himself the fantastic tomb in the Castle Church which to-day still arouses our amazement.

His contemporaries hardly knew of his great plans. He thought of founding an established Church, as in France. But at that time, around 1500, France intervened in the destiny of Germany.

Not until the sixteenth century did the Germans develop a national feeling that was cultivated by the people themselves—the burghers and the peasants—everyone except the princes and kings, whose interests still extended beyond the borders. Nevertheless, France was always looked upon by the Germans as a model for everything aristocratic. When Goethe once spoke of the French nobleman, he added: "In

comparison, Germans like Götz, Frundsberg and others always appear to me like burghers and philistines." Not until this time did the growing strength of France begin to engender a fierce national pride in Germany. The Rhine a German river, Charlemagne a German ruler, Strasbourg a German city—for the first time these ideas took hold of German heads and hearts with an effect that was to last four centuries. In Paris it was dogma that Charlemagne had been a Frenchman ! How else could they have called themselves Frenchmen after this Frank ! Why had the crown of Charlemagne for seven centuries rested on the heads of German princes ? In response to such talk the Reichstag at Worms threatened that Germany would create an established Church if a Frenchman were to become emperor.

Not until now, after the end of the wars with England and after French unity had been achieved, did French jealousy break the surface. Seven centuries had elapsed before a King of France seriously aspired to the crown of his Frankish predecessor—a unique occurrence between neighbouring countries separated only by a river. And in the light of the twentieth century this jealousy over the bilingual border province of Alsace flares up anew—over a city which much prefers to live its own independent life instead of choosing one of its two suitors ! To the distant, impartial observer, these two nations must seem mad to keep on mauling each other for four hundred years over this bit of territory.

Amid all these confusions, Maximilian was the first emperor after many centuries to recognize the root of the evil. Though he was forced to keep on good terms with Rome, he was the first to call himself "Elected Emperor" and to dispense with the coronation. Thus he placed power and office within the Reich itself, where it should have always rested. His energy succeeded in establishing imperial law, an innovation the selfish princes had always sought to prevent. They were interested solely in their power over their own lands and their own knights. Outside feuds did not worry them, feuds could still be started merely by serving three days' notice. Thus there existed then within Germany the same state of anarchy which to-day enables a European robber state to launch an attack upon its neighbours, after having provoked the killing of a border guard three days before.

Maximilian now reinstated the Reich tax. At the same time he made the daring decision to give Germany its first court of appeal, and, above all, he created the great public peace in Germany, the eternal *Landfrieden*. The great significance of the event lay in the fact that emperor and

diets were at last able to get together to sign a law. The result was great distrust among the Germans. It sprang from the fact that the people, inured to arms, were alarmed to see right taking the place of might. Were not these knights who fought among themselves praised but yesterday as heroes in song and legend? Now they were to be called criminals! The feuds suppressed? Excellent, said the burgher and the peasant, for now he might pursue his way without fear. But what happens to the right of my arms? the knight asked.

A far-reaching disintegration had increased insecurity. At this time, around 1500, the five duchies that had originally formed the Reich had split up into more than three hundred sovereignties. Every baron and lord sought to become an Elector, so that his son might become emperor. Together with a few scattered cities, they all had the right to appear at the Reichstag; but knights and peasants, now almost equally poor, had no political rights.

Thus the heterogeneous forces of two eras blended and reverberated about the ageing Maximilian, who in his worries over the Reich forgot his dancing and his fantasies, even his solitary hunting forays. He had done more for the Reich than his ancestors, and had many achievements to his credit. But gratitude was not his lot. Not yet turned sixty, and in a gloomy mood, he travelled to Innsbruck for a rest; but the city closed its gates to its debt-ridden patron, and almost like a beggar the grizzled Emperor had to travel on, to die a solitary death soon afterwards in the Austrian mountains.

### 3

THE MANSFELD MINER and his wife, descendants of Thuringian peasants, who became the parents of Luther, must have been cruel and sombre people. In his letters and conversations, Luther charged them before all the world with responsibility for his nervous affliction. The fear of beatings that used to follow his slightest failure in boyhood so much upset the mind of this devout man that all his life the mistakes of his later career can be explained by it. Whether or not it be true, as the Greek proverb has it, that great men grow from a harsh childhood; whether or not they would never rise to greatness under tender care; no other great historical character, at any rate, is overshadowed by such

gloom. Certainly the impact of cruel treatment upon a delicate soul helped to determine the destiny of Luther.

Analysis of his soul revealed even to Luther's contemporaries—above all, to himself—the deeper reasons for his audacity and his weakness. Down to his old age he described and interpreted in his own imaginative style, rich with imagery, the devastating impressions of his youth.

The mother's habit of beating her children, the dull gloom which the father brought home from the mineshaft, the obvious sadism of Luther's teacher—all these oppressed him. What inner struggle must this youthful soul have undergone, if even after he had the world's ear he never sought to exonerate his own mother! No, he told his friends and posterity how his parents let him suffer want, shutting him out into the dreary cold of the winter mornings to make room for the other children.

Yet the Luthers were by no means notorious ruffians. No one in their little community cast aspersions upon the family as such. They were Saxon peasant stock, and it was not they who were the exception but just this one son Martin of the tender soul. Neither poverty nor suffering explains their brutality, for they were growing prosperous. The father had rented two smelters and was building a house in the city. Nor were the peasants more brutal than other classes. Several centuries later, letters from younger sons reveal flashes of what happened in the cadet schools of Prussia, nor is the treatment in to-day's party schools any more humane than on that morning when little Martin Luther in Eisleben felt the rod fifteen times.

Sent out into the streets of Magdeburg without money or skill, the fourteen-year-old boy literally had to beg his bread, often with a raging fever. Later, he found favour in the house of a friendly merchant's wife whose heart he had won through his singing. Fever and song—those were the reactions of Luther's inner life, the symptoms of paroxysm and salvation that accompanied him far beyond his youth. Fever and song—those were the symbols in which fear and love found expression in him.

But when money and honour were at stake, the father gave the talented seventeen-year-old son enough to study law at Erfurt, that he might someday become burgomaster or even chancellor to the archbishop. But Luther preferred to immerse himself in philosophy, so that he might emerge from the mineshafts of his doubts to the light. Since he was for four years surrounded by merry fellow-students—young humanists who led a jolly life—he surely must have awakened to love as well as to wine and song. A man who knew women at twenty, who then took the monk's vows of chastity, and another twenty years later, between his

fortieth and fiftieth year, sired five children in holy wedlock, gives us a token of the struggles his responsible mind was undergoing all the while.

These inner struggles grew when Luther, in search of God rather than of knowledge, predestined for worldly life yet taking alarm at every rustling leaf, in his student circle came to hate women and drink. Despite the high spirits of youth, despite the fact that he himself probably did not engage in excesses, he felt himself hurled back into the penitent thoughts of his epoch, the everlasting doubts of the God-searchers, torn between death and the Devil like Faust, his contemporary. Those who knew him then report that occasionally, in the midst of a drinking-bout, he would stare before him vacantly—hearing, as he confided to a friend, a great distant silence in all the bedlam. The fear he could not banish depressed his self-confidence. For no good reason he felt himself cursed by God and sought to curse God in turn. Once, on a walking trip, Luther suddenly drew his sword and slashed the arteries in his wrist. Fortunately he was not far from town, and his companion was able to get him to a surgeon in time to save his life. And what did he do as he lay there, pale from loss of blood, slowly regaining his strength? He learned to play the lute. "Only my prayers to the Holy Mother of God saved my life then." Feverish, with a song on his lips, he entered upon his first great crisis.

About this time a friend of his was stabbed to death in a brawl. All he needed now to forsake the gaudy world was a sign from heaven. As he told the story later, he was overtaken by a storm and vowed amid the lightning flashes: "Holy Saint Anne, help me, and I will take holy orders!" (Later, when he broke the vow, he called this "a vow enacted in duress," thus salving his conscience.) Soon afterwards he disappeared behind the high gate of the Augustinian monastery. He was twenty-one.

The bare cell, the monotonous routine of seventy monks; the stern discipline; the solemn vows of chastity and poverty; the grave dignity of his confessor and of the Father Superior—all this must have stirred him deeply. He clung to it for a long time and did not formally cast it off until twenty years later.

At the very hour when he was to celebrate his first mass in the monastery chapel, he was suddenly seized by such trepidation that only a stern gesture of the Father Superior kept him from fleeing the altar at the last moment.

He heard a chuckling from hidden corners; chills and trembling seized him; he was found in a sweat and in tears. If his cassock was in disarray, if he made a trifling mistake in the liturgy, he would fall down

in despair, groaning that he was unregenerate, fainting, imploring the saints ; while in between he would shout : " What a disgrace I shall be to my parents ! " His long nocturnal vigils resulted in sleepless nights ; his digestion grew impaired ; no one could help him. Once, when the Gospel of Saint Mark was being read—the story of the deaf-mute who, lacking speech, had ground his teeth—Luther threw himself to the ground and cried : " 'Tis not I ! 'Tis not I ! "

There is a straight line from these incidents to his later days, when a friend constantly had to be in his presence in case of such attacks. This continued into his old age, when without any reason he used to come crying to his wife, insisting that they would have nothing to live on. Luther's depressions might be projected as a curve, from asceticism to rebellion and back again, for his was a profoundly analytical mind and he knew well how to interpret his condition, attributing it to an unconquerable sense of anxiety.

No wonder the monks in the monastery began to regard Brother Augustinus as possessed. Did he not call himself accursed ? He was always in fear of punishment, once threatened by father and mother, now by God—a wretched soul robbed of its worldly balance.

Neither good works nor aspiration were of much help in his perilously poised mood. Divine grace was all he asked of God, and he eagerly surrendered all freedom of will—a freedom that had never meant liberation to him. Decades afterward Lutherans, Zwinglians and Calvinists still quarrelled as to whether salvation had to be acquired by the faithful or was conferred by heaven. Luther's own passionate answer, his fanatical defiance, sprang from his deep inner upheavals.

And God sent him, who was in a mood of hope, a friend. A Saxon nobleman, Herr von Staupitz, a vicar and a psychologist, who came to inspect the monastery, grasped what the monk lacked—life and movement, teaching and speech, free air instead of submission. He brought the strange friar from the monastery to the University at Wittenberg ; Luther was in his cassock, a professor and a doctor, but still a monk taken up with prayers, masses and fasting. Luther at twenty-five stepped upon the threshold of a world he had left four years before—behind him the monastery, before him life.

Frederic the Wise, then Elector of Saxony, seems to have been a humane prince who really was concerned about his subjects when he began to take a stand against the perpetual demands of Rome. This new theologian, who seemed to think for himself, might come in handy. At the behest of the Elector, Luther was also to become a preacher. He

handed in fifteen objections in writing, urgently asking to be released. Only because of the illness of the town vicar was he finally compelled to ascend the pulpit one Sunday.

But then what happened? Facing a crowd for the first time, called upon to communicate his knowledge and his faith to others, free to develop in the German language the thoughts he had always concealed behind Latin scholasticism, he at one stroke proved himself a master of speech and language. His text was an orthodox one, taken from Saint Paul, but the dull-witted Saxon peasants and burghers felt stirred to the depths. The story of the sermon made the rounds and the next Sunday the church was crowded. Even the Elector came to listen. All eyes hung on the new preacher. After all the old folderol, here was an inspired young man speaking about the grace of God which everyone sought—speaking in a vigorous German that went to peasant life for its images. How the suppressed self-confidence of the preacher must have risen when he discovered a talent in himself which his own constant fear had obstructed.

And slowly the world grew brighter around the gloomy monk. A great physician who listened to him said these fine words: "This friar hath deep eyes; he shall have wondrous fancies."

Soon the young monk and professor saw himself dispatched to Rome, to transact some business at the Vatican for his Order. In Rome Luther saw Julius II, the worldly Pope, shining like a demi-god, but Luther saw him only at a distance, and without the slightest sense of indignation. Utterly untrained in affairs of state, the monk caught no inkling of the great political crisis that was shaking Rome in 1511. While we see other Germans of the time outraged by the scenes and customs of the ruling classes, or enthusiastic about all the beauty, Luther remains blind to both. Not until many years later did he sum himself up in grandiose confession: "I believed in everything in Rome; but later I rued my faith."

## 4

THE YOUNG German scholars who had come to Rome about the same time did not believe everything, but they never rued what they did believe. The same people, who at best appeared crafty to Luther, Melanchthon compared with the heroes of the *Iliad*. The new spirit of

beauty and tolerance then awakening in Italy was reflected in the poetry and writings of the humanists, who professed the new ideal of the age.

Never has German genius more gloriously depicted the German spirit than did Holbein in his pictures of Erasmus. Erasmus was not really a German; but if he was half a German by virtue of his Dutch birth, the other half may be derived from Switzerland, which he selected as his residence, and thus he may be reckoned a German, after all. He was the first great European, proud of having no country of his own. Yet one does not like to drop him from the ranks of German thinkers, for no one equals the crystal clarity of his spirit, his genius and his serenity, as shown in his portrait. Even the noble heads of Leibniz, Kant and Hegel pale before the immortal features of Erasmus.

Erasmus sought wisdom rather than faith. He aspired to enlightenment rather than theology; reason was familiar to him, passion alien, and irony he preferred to both. Twenty years older than Luther and world-famous when Luther appeared on the scene, Erasmus from far off accepted the German monk as an ally, because Luther too was ready to fight Rome. But it soon became apparent that Luther's aggressive fanaticism lumped everything together in its hatred—art and splendour, the Holy See and Italy—while the worldly wisdom of Erasmus was able to distinguish between the eclipse of the spirit through priestly power and the revival of learning in Rome which he admired as the heir of ancient civilization.

Yet the beginnings of both men had been similar. Erasmus, an illegitimate son, had been harried by his teachers, like Luther. Both began as choirboys, both were of delicate health, both entered a monastery.—Erasmus not for purposes of prayer but for instruction, for the monasteries were still the repositories of learning. Luther deceived himself when he took to the cloth. Erasmus cheated the cloth. The one was swept into the cassock by a storm, the other by the promptings of his conscience. Thus Luther suffered tortures from asceticism and later broke his vows, while Erasmus made the Pope release him in time. The ailing Saxon peasant son transmitted his disharmony to the world, and when he burst his shell the concussion shook all Germany; the elegant Dutchman of obscure origin conquered his physical handicap with care and brilliance, radiating rather than hurling his opinions. Luther was a German through and through, hardly ever leaving the narrow confines of Saxony. Erasmus was at home in Rome, Paris, London, and especially in ancient Athens. Leaping across time and space, he spoke to all mankind, not merely to the Germans.



But Erasmus remained unimpressed by power in any form; he steadfastly refused office and honours to enjoy freedom of thought and action. Whereas Luther, in times of strife, carried a sword to protect himself against sudden assault, Erasmus went through the world unarmed. His abhorrence of violence was profound, while Luther saw in violence the sanctioning of State power. Luther could never have written these sentences by Erasmus: "The people build cities, and the princes tear them down. The hard work of the citizens creates the wealth which robber barons plunder. Representatives of the people write good laws, only to have kings break them. The people seek peace, but their rulers seize upon every opportunity for war."

In Germany, where the main phases of his life and work were laid, Erasmus, the conservative revolutionary, gained such power, purely by virtue of his mind, as has been held by no one since—not even by Goethe. The fear this commoner without pedigree, rank or heirs aroused in emperor and Pope, in kings and great lords throughout Europe, represents perhaps the only exception from the German rule of the supremacy of the State over the spirit. So great was the power of this scholar that if his attitude did not actually decide the course of the Reformation at the time of crisis, he might well have turned it into a different direction, had he desired it. He worshipped Jesus as the humane teacher, thus approaching Plato, the Greek love of beauty, and a tolerance that fought stupidity instead of vice. In spirit he was related to Frederic II; but Erasmus came three centuries later and had the benefit of all the new discoveries of the Renaissance. Enjoying equal prestige in Paris and Rome, in Rotterdam and London, the scholar of Basle, in the struggle between the Pope and the reformers, could afford to salute the latter without reviling the former. His style gave such a roguish note to his heresy that all the world, even the Pope, smiled when reading him, and no one sought to provoke him.

All his life Erasmus remained an intellectual; he looked to the spirit alone for an upswing and for changes in the German State. He taught reason, kindness and peace, and thus, when passion, parties and power came to solve the great questions of the day, he remained without influence in public affairs.

If Erasmus is called a radiant star, Reuchlin beside him shines like the surface of a lake. Because of this very depth and solitude, Reuchlin was to trouble both State and spirit.

In a magnificent parody based on Reuchlin's ideas—the so-called *Letters of Obscure Men*—a group of anonymous humanists hurled a volley

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of brilliant satire against Church and religious orders : it was the prelude to the Reformation, a spiritual inroad upon the State the like of which Germany never again experienced, not even at the hands of Heine. There was laughter all over Germany, and of all people Erasmus is supposed to have laughed so much that a sore on his body burst.

Humanism then was called a heathen baptism, and indeed, good Christians sought to garner as much of antiquity as was offered to ardent minds. Out of the earth and from the rivers the ancient gods rose up once more. In Italy the thirst for beauty seemed to act like a divining rod in leading fervent youth to its sources. More and more ancient statues were unearthed. Enraptured Germans gazed southward, where they had divined beauty rather than seen it, as the prophecies of the Old Testament seemed to come true in the New. It seemed as though Italy were now to be conquered by the spirit, as had once been attempted by the emperors. Even the dream of world dominion returned on a higher plane. As always when a nation feels itself grow strong, fanatics arose who insisted that the German language was the oldest of all and that the German race therefore was chosen to rule the world. Even Adam had spoken German in the Garden of Eden, they insisted, and Japheth, who had left Babylon before the confusion of tongues, had migrated to Germany. Alexander the Great had merely been a satrap in a Greece conquered by Germans. Jerusalem had been founded by Germans ; the Amazons were descended from the Saxons ; as the sons of Japheth, the Germans were also the first Christians ; the Latins and Slavs were mere second-rate peoples of a later age. All this was written more than four hundred years before our latest German prophets.

The first humanists attempted to write in German, but they were none too sure of themselves. When he heard his Latin elegance praised, this was the vivid retort of one of them : " It were better to spin the threads from one's own body like the caterpillar than to garner riches from all around like the bee." But the Germans did not take it amiss. Hutten, who knew how to turn a neat Latin verse, found a new pathos in German and issued this clarion call of eternal youth : " Take thou the rope, barbarism, and prepare for exile. Learning is in flower, the spirits are stirring. 'Tis a joy to be alive ! " Great debates started up—one on every market-place. Never was there so much writing and talking in German as when the basic problems of physics, originally revolutionized by Copernicus, were shaking the foundations of Bible dogma. So strongly intertwined was all that had heretofore separated spirit and faith, spirit and State, that the new forces in German were already

in open rebellion against the past long before an Augustine monk nailed his theses to a church door.

Yet it was precisely the finest German spirits of that time who got enmeshed in an inextricable net. They encouraged and sought to extend art and culture—the salute from antiquity ; but as enemies of the Papal world, as primitive Christians, tolerant and formless, they became the protagonists of the awakening North against the same Italy that in these very decades was radiantly upholding culture, art and ancient grandeur for all the world to see. Young poets fired their epigrams at the Popes for their sale of indulgences and open flaunting of their mistresses ; and yet at the same time Hutten caught the flame of the Renaissance.

Ulrich von Hutten (1488-1523) was Luther's junior by five years. A knight and a poet and at the same time the first great journalist among the Germans, he had been destined for the monastery but had quickly made his escape. Retaining a hatred of everything monkish, he published a heretical pamphlet and with ingenious audacity dedicated it to Pope Leo. Such gestures, pamphlets, and the motto *Ich hab's gewagt !* ("I dared it !") are the only things about Hutten that survive. He might have been forgotten altogether but for a friendship whose monument stands to-day at the Ebernburg in Swabia. A mighty knight, resting on his sword, gazes far into the land, following the outstretched hand of the younger, smaller, slimmer man to his left who seems to point out and recognize the enemy he is unable to destroy.

The knight Franz von Sickingen, two years older than Luther, had no peer in power among the princes and was stronger than many a duke ; he had assembled so much gold and so many troops that even the emperor wooed his favour. Among the body of impoverished and disgruntled knights, Franz von Sickingen stood out, because an inner urge drove him to help the weak and take the field against their oppressors. His methods, like those of all the knights, were assault and robbery, but his motive was a moral one.

He met Hutten in the course of such a struggle. Soon both sat together in Sickingen's castle : the mighty Sickingen, who clung to the ancient customs in simple-minded faith, who had studied neither Latin nor much else, now spent long winter weeks under the tutelage of the gifted Hutten, just as the greying Charlemagne had once studied. Hutten's dreams—liberty, justice, reformation—were translated into action by Sickingen. Both proceeded without ulterior motives and thus both gained. This alliance of might and mind was to stand the

test of the ensuing years, making it unique in German history. And facing the monument to these two men, we who are born so long after them dream of the day when once again perhaps the man of thought may point out to the sword-carrier those treasures in the German lands that must be defended.

## 5

LUTHER SPENT seven tranquil years as a professor and preacher in Wittenberg. He learned as much as he taught; he studied Greek and discovered how greatly the Latin translation of the Bible had falsified the original. He saw that in the Latin version *poenitentia* had been chosen to render the Greek *μετανοια*; in other words, not simply good works in general were demanded of Christians, but a profound inner conversion, which could be granted only by God. There it was again—the grace of God that must be conferred from above, the impotence of the will, upon which Luther built his system of ethics. A single word read by an unknown monk comparing two tomes that seemed to charge the air of his narrow cell with the threat of doom—this had a more enduring effect on coming generations than the Emperor's public peace, solemnly proclaimed to princes and Reich.

At the time, Leo X had been raised to the Papal throne, and it was affirmed that the Pope, in addition to his clerical power, should wield the secular power, which so many German emperors had disputed. Thus fortified by the theologians, Leo resumed the sale of indulgences which his predecessor had planned; above all, he sought to draw revenue from Germany. Fifty thousand gold ducats—that was a large sum of money; but Michelangelo's plans for rebuilding St. Peter's into the most beautiful church of the world had long been gathering dust.

A Dominican prior, Tetzl, hawked the letters of indulgence to the churches with huge processions accompanied with drums and fifes. But close behind him marched the emissary of Fugger's banking house, for the Pope too had already pledged the yield before even the first printed scrap of paper had been sold. Those who now paid well could save from purgatory not only their own souls but even those of their dear departed. Repentance and atonement were no longer demanded.

Luther felt aggrieved by the misuse of a custom he did not attack as such. In those days such questions were disputed in a public debate.

So Luther put together a series of theses in which caution and peasant wit were blended.

The Pope's good intentions had merely been misinterpreted, he wrote. The true believer demanded punishment, not purchased release. How could the Pope be concerned about money? Only prayer could be dear to him. And why did not the Pope release men from purgatory through the power of love, since he was able to do so for money? Why did not the richest ruler in the world build the Cathedral from his own purse? Why did he suddenly nullify the old indulgences? To fail to oppose so wrong an application of indulgence meant to make the Pope the butt of mockery. The Pope must be apprised of such harm, and the savants invited to set forth a solution.

Luther had these thoughts summarized in ninety-five theses, printed in Latin, and nailed to the door of his church—it was the day before All Saints', October 31, 1517. There was nothing in the theses to incite to riot or rebellion. But underneath it all there trembled a deep anger, a secret scorn carefully repressed, like the tone of a court jester telling His Majesty terrible truths with a servile smile. And this was so strong that it burst through the confinement of Latin. The people who heard the words in translation were filled with joy and indignation, and the theses were reprinted in German; translated by some obscure student, the leaflet flew from the little town out into the Saxon countryside, from the Elbe to the Rhine, to the Danube, to the sea and the Alps, into all the resplendent old cities and poverty-stricken villages, into the chapters of the canons, the castles of the knights, the palaces of the princes—and very quickly to Rome itself. Such were the cold, numbered arguments of an unknown monk who did not sign his name—who never signed his name to any publications; who had never spoken at a Church Council; who outside the little town of Wittenberg was known to only a few citizens, monks and peasants.

So great was the invention of Gutenberg. So great was the effect of a faith profoundly felt.

The most surprised of all whom the paper had set af flutter was the author himself. At first amazed, then frightened, he saw his work create world-wide reverberations which he had in no sense dreamed or even desired. He knew well that Frederic the Wise, his patron and sovereign, shared his critical thoughts; but he was not then able to foresee how the prince would utilize his strange professor in the game of politics. At the impending Reichstag at Augsburg, Maximilian sought to call up the armed forces of the Reich against the threatening

Turks. In his fight against the infidels he needed the friendship of the Pope. The Pope, in turn, had to humour the Dominicans, who, but recently discredited by the *Letters of Obscure Men*, were unwilling to take this second blow without challenge and now put up their prior to debate Luther's theses in public.

With sudden alarm, Luther saw himself swept away into the swirl of world events which his mind had never touched—he, a devout monk who resented the degradation of his doctrine, as had many clerics before him, a shrewd peasant who had delivered himself of his scorn in a few sentences. Although he had attained the self-confidence of an urban preacher through the effect of his sermons, he was accustomed to obey authority, and at once promised his sovereign to keep silent, growing angry when the students burned the counter-theses of Tetzel on the Wittenberg market-place with many a gay prank. But a journey he made to Heidelberg at this time seems to have awakened him.

On this journey, undertaken when he was thirty-five years old, Luther suddenly came face to face with fame. When he appeared at a monastery, a town hall or a tavern, burghers and peasants foregathered, pointed him out, greeted him and sought to gain his presence. This was the man from Saxony, they told their children, who recently had minced no words with the Pope. How his self-respect must have grown when in Heidelberg he found the best heads of the university eager to shake hands with him ! Besides this circle of lofty spirits there were many young people, among them an erudite young man of twenty-one, son of an armourer, delicate and submissive like Saint John. It was Melanchthon, who especially ingratiated himself with Luther and whom Luther later drew to Wittenberg as a teacher of Greek.

The people, young and old, devout and learned, had for the first time given this man of ingrained fear, this doubting, humble, ever-nervous character, an awareness of his great mission. Evidently, he concluded, this was the German people, these different stocks and classes he was now meeting. Against his will—indeed, against his nature—Luther became a militant.

When the Pontiff now summoned him to Rome, the Elector proposed, for Luther's protection, that he be first examined in Germany. Luther faced a second surprise : for the first time he was to encounter the Emperor in the flesh !

Before this came to pass there were many public debates. On one occasion Luther stepped strangely out of character when the debate between him and the theologian Eck in Leipzig sharpened, and the two

men, disputing in Latin, came to the power of the Church Councils. Luther said :

" Even the Councils may be in error ; only the Bible is infallible."

" If that be your belief," Eck exclaimed, " you are a heathen ! "

And it was then that Luther suddenly lapsed into German : " I do not deny the power of the Pope and the Councils, merely their divine origin. Even the Emperor is not of divine origin, yet we are required to pay him homage."

This was a decisive step. The effect of this debate was tremendous. In an age without newspaper and radio, word-of-mouth reports were able to spread with much greater effect, because the things that touched the innermost depths of the people were not diluted with hundreds of trifles that merely tickled surface curiosity. Luther felt himself borne up more and more ; his courage and fighting spirit mounted when he saw how the great humanists were coming over to his side. He sat down and for the first time wrote theological polemics. The ascetic monk found an exquisite simile : " Man and God need a third party as intermediary no more than do two lovers."

The storm broke. Pope Leo demanded extradition and then excommunicated Luther. The Papal bull was issued from Rome. Luther now invited the students to come without the gates to watch the Papal bull being burned. And exultantly they stood about the pyre as Luther cast the parchment scroll into the fire.

The Pope had excommunicated an Augustinian monk, a convicted heretic. Now the Inquisitor might deliver Luther to the flames, as Luther had done the Papal bull. But secular power, his own prince, had offered him protection. All depended upon what the Emperor thought. Maximilian had died the preceding year. His successor had been elected this year. Who was the new Emperor ?

## 6

THE KINGS of France, England and Spain had taken part in the imperial election of the year 1519 as in a tournament. France, above all, believed that now its time had come—the time to take over the leadership of Germany and Europe. Powerful and united, France stood prepared : its commerce and industry were united ; Paris developed into the sole



capital, the sovereign princes curbed to the vassalage of the House of Valois. Its long coastlines in the west and north opened it up to the new discoveries, rendering its economy independent of Italy ; and an established Church protected it against Papal tax claims. By contrast, neighbouring Germany was without a capital and a reigning dynasty ; its geographic position was less favourable to import and export ; and now its interior was split by a religious uprising of princes and thinkers who fought each other in partisan struggle for and against Rome. Here in Germany with its centuries-old dream of world dominion, Rome was still a power capable of putting forward strong pretensions against Emperor or Reich. In France, Spain or Italy, on the other hand, no one needed to break loose from Rome, for none had been paying it political obeisance ; even the Spanish Inquisition had taken on the character of a State Police force.

Francis I, the rich young King of France, was about to buy up the votes of the impoverished German princes. The Margrave of Brandenburg, always ready to betray his nation, had strong French leanings. Others followed his lead, and Francis felt sure of a majority. He sought to win, and won, support by giving a pledge that makes one smile—namely, that if elected Emperor, he would but rarely visit Germany, leaving the princes to themselves.

Yet when the election came to pass there arose the sweeping demand that a German Emperor be elected. When the great auction at Frankfort at last arrived, Charles, grandson of Maximilian, dug deeper into his pocket—or rather into that of the Fuggers who were financing him—paying almost a million florins. Since in addition he pledged loyalty to the Pope, as well as many other things to the Electors, German interests and sentiments joined together. In the end the candidate's youth may have militated for rather than against him. The vassals were for a young prince whom they hoped to be able to guide ; the commoners were for him because he was not pompous ; the women were for him because he would cut such a fine figure in the coronation robes.

Charles V (1519-1556), probably the greatest German emperor, resembles no one before or after him. That is plain even from the little clay bust from Bruges which shows him as a youth of sixteen. His fascination lies neither in his beauty nor in his spirit, but in his race and breeding. His blood was a mixture of strains from seven dynasties, giving renewed proof that "race," in the sense of a desirable quality, seems to depend on the richness and diversity of racial mixture. An air of arrogance and expectancy, self-confidence and a gift of observation,

held together by an innate talent and urge to command—these seem to endow this fine, pointed, aristocratic head with the expression of a thoroughbred horse that tolerates no rider. He was just nineteen when he became Emperor ; but after being declared of age at fifteen in Brussels, he had already begun to reign as Duke of Burgundy, and at sixteen, when his Spanish grandfather died, he had become a king. He had inherited half of Europe, and, in addition, newly discovered America—half a dozen crowns, to which the German was now added ! A youth of twenty, he had to bear this vast burden without the aid of father, mother or elder brother, without a grandfather, without friends, almost without control by the councils of his realms. What a temptation ! To resist it took greatness of character rather than genius. That character Charles developed and proved in forty years.

The difference between Charles, Charlemagne and Frederic II is immediately obvious. All three shared the desire for world dominion ; but in Charlemagne the driving force was conquest, in Frederic culture, while in Charles it was dynasty. None of these three greatest emperors in German history was a German in the real sense. To this day Charlemagne is claimed by the French as their own, and indeed, he subdued more German lands by warfare than any others. Half of Frederic's ancestors were Norman, and he spent almost his entire life in Italy. Among the seven lines of descent of Charles V but one is German. If one set out to put together a ruler who, by descent and heritage, would be qualified to unite Europe into one super-national realm, one could find no better family tree.

Charles savoured the destiny of greatness in the German civil wars—victories and defeats, reform and peace ; while he found happiness in Holland and Spain, where he spent his youth and his declining years. Unlike Charlemagne, he was not out for conquest, for he owned too much rather than too little. Unlike Frederic, he did not quarrel with the Popes but was nearly always on good terms with them. Brought up a Burgundian knight, he had the piety of the Dutchman and the stateliness of the Spaniard. His character showed traces of all his ancestors, but from the Germans he had inherited only the lower lip and the hearty appetite of the Hapsburgs. He never had the *Gemütlichkeit* of the Germans. He liked to surround himself with art and intellect, but he was a patron and did not have artistic aspirations, like Frederic ; nor did he like to see culture in opposition to the Church, for Charles loved his righteous faith.

Searching in the cool waters of his character for secret grottoes where the current might course more warmly, one does, indeed, find a deep

religious feeling. From it later sprang his true devotion to his wife, whom after her death he never replaced by a second political marriage. She was his wife, married to him before God ; she was the Queen of all the realms he had brought her ; and it was from this feeling of proud humility that he loved her. It was in this same spirit that he accepted sovereignty over the lands to the government of which he devoted all the energies of a serious-minded life. For Charles V was very much the great lord, and his dignity is unsurpassed by any ruler in history.

As a child he had never known his Spanish mother, later called the Mad Queen Joan. After giving birth to Charles at Ghent, she had returned to her home where, exhausted by a quick succession of confinements and consumed by jealousy, her mind had begun to become unsettled. When Charles, at the age of seventeen, together with his sister, made his entry into Spain as King, he visited his mother for the first time, in a darkened room. An aunt, Margaret, the shrewd daughter of Maximilian, had brought up the boy in her castles in the Netherlands. His tutors, devout men who schooled him in the orthodox faith though at the same time in tolerance, taught him all the proper knightly arts but also let him enjoy the company of artists and thinkers.

How happy were Charles's beginnings ! He had complete trust in his aged teacher. He was but a boy when he came to Aix-la-Chapelle for his magnificent coronation ceremony. Before the throne of Charlemagne he swore to do justice and defend the faith, firmly calling out "*Volo !*" whereupon a thousand voices rang out "*Fiat !*" He loved the lustre of armour and brocade, and the people rejoiced in his resolute mien. Magellan had just returned, bringing back the treasures from the Pacific which Charles soon afterwards took with him to Windsor to dazzle the King of England. In the Netherlands he found a charming daughter of the people whom he loved as long as he was able to tarry—and later he made the daughter that sprang from this love a duchess. Pope Leo, moreover, did him the favour of dying apace, enabling Charles to have his teacher, the Bishop of Utrecht, elected Pope.

All this bounty fell into the lap of the child of fortune before he was twenty-two. Destiny and men had always said him yes, yet the youth remained mature and modest. He retained his cool self-assurance even when he encountered his first nay. It fell from Luther's lips.

At his first Reichstag, in Worms in 1521, Charles found the princes restless. It was the growing revolt in Germany which confused and divided them. Who would influence the young Emperor ? With amazement they beheld a young man who seemed to have neither moods

nor favourites, only political motives. He felt obligated to the Pope, and thus he was at once ready to outlaw the banned monk. But when a few Electors demanded a hearing for Luther, Charles summoned him before the Reichstag.

Luther decided to answer the summons. His own Elector had promised him protection, and the imperial letter of safe-conduct, benevolent and vigilant, accompanied him like an archangel. Nevertheless all Germany was excited. Was Luther to be killed? Was it not a century ago that another emperor had promised another professor of divinity the self-same safe-conduct to a Church Council, only to break his word in the end? Luther himself was in high spirits. In triumphal procession he set out, westward bound. Everywhere the people wanted to see him, to touch him. On the tower in Worms the watchman had sounded his horn when the dangerous monk approached. A herald had to force a way through the crowd, when in the afternoon Luther went to the Episcopal residence, where the Emperor was in residence. There, on the great hall on the second floor, he found Emperor and delegates already assembled in the crowded chamber.

The proceedings, brief as they were, are unique in German history. Never before or afterwards did State meet spirit face to face; never again did outward and inward power, represented in two men, thus take each other's measure. For here was no heretic facing Pope and cardinals, like Huss at Constance, to defend his conception of the faith against Christ's Deputy; here was no prisoner at the bar of the Supreme Court, to answer for having violated the king's law and power, for having incited the people to rebellion; nor was there here an emissary of the Pope to the Emperor, to exchange maledictions and dethronements. Here was the full panoply of the Reich's power, headed by the Emperor in person, assembled to listen to a lone thinker, a professor of theology, backed by no organized group, not even a sect—a private person whose teachings displeased the Church—to listen to him and to ponder how much of what he said was true, or whether it was all false, or only a part of it. This confrontation was not the old antithesis of Church and State. It was the spirit facing the State; and this for the first time among the Germans, who were accustomed to keep the two apart.

What did the two men behold?

The Emperor saw before him a monk of thirty-seven years, then still lean, dressed in a black cassock, the subject of Cranach's early profile picture: sharp-nosed, angular, pallid, with coal-black eyes. The monk saw before him a great lord in varicoloured velvet and rich silks, the

image of the contemporary portrait by the Dutchman Orley with its almost photographic vividness : the fine pointed head, the nose irregular like Luther's but finer, the lips parted as on almost all of Charles's portraits ; with delicate eyebrows as though painted, dark hair cropped, he looked somewhat as does a modern intelligent girl of boyish appearance to-day. The delicacy of the hand and the manner in which it was placed, the chain of the Golden Fleece deep around the shoulders, the embroidered linen underneath, a clasp of precious stones in the flat, cocked cap, the pale face listening attentively—just so he must have looked as Luther faced him, the Emperor in all likelihood on a raised seat, and the pale monk in his black cassock who had not been presented to the King but was led in like a strange animal into the arena.

Both men misjudged each other completely. "He sat there," Luther related later, "like an innocent lamb betwixt hogs and dogs." Charles, on his part, told the Legate, who wrote it down : "That one would never make me a heretic." Thus both men were driven by their prejudices to underestimate each other. All the Emperor saw was a fanatical peasant who might be possessed of cunning ; all the peasant son saw was a prince whom he held, true to the fable, to be purer and more simple-minded than the Emperor in fact was. Luther, by the way, is supposed to have glanced about curiously, thus arousing the displeasure of the court.

He strode to a table where—to his great surprise, as he later admitted—he found his books ; he also found himself facing Doctor Eck, who asked him in Latin, first, whether he acknowledged the books as his own, and then, whether he recanted their contents. The first question Luther affirmed in a low voice ; after the second question he maintained a perplexed silence. The old terror that had seized him on the day of his ordination, when he was to celebrate his first mass—the fear that had so often paralyzed him—now laid hold of him again and he asked for time to consider his answer. Amazement swept the hall and everyone was disappointed. A great spectacle seemed to have been staged in vain ; so many princes, the Emperor himself, had been bidden only to see the famous leading actor hesitate. Grudgingly Luther was granted an adjournment, but only till the morrow.

Luther quickly gained his composure. That same night he wrote a friend that he would not recant a single word, "if Christ have mercy upon me." In great moments as in small, even in the face of judgments so long considered, he was deeply dependent upon the suggestion of the moment, whether it be called the mercy of Christ or mood or nervous disposition. When he re-entered the following night—for this time they let him wait

two hours and did not receive him until the torches had been lit—he was once more in full control of himself, and according to all the reports his bearing was self-assured. Evidently in response to private coaching, he adopted a courtly tone, the first thing he did being to apologize for having confused certain titles the day before, and for possibly doing so again. But he was clever enough to omit the princes of the Church from this prepared address.

First he answered in Latin, in a somewhat long-winded style. As his opponent Eck grew restless at these flourishes and insisted on an unequivocal statement in the German language, Luther, so say the chroniclers, replied in a firm voice, quite different from his demeanour on the first evening, “in a manner that his adversaries wished had been more timid, and pusillanimous” :

“Since then Your Sacred Imperial Majesty and ye highborn gentlemen require of me a simple answer, therefore shall I render it without horns nor teeth, in this wise: Until the time that I be found guilty from evidence of Scripture or other clear testimony I am bound by my own citations, and my conscience is held securely in God’s word. I put no trust in the unsupported word of the Pope and the Councils, for it is established that often have they erred and contradicted themselves. I cannot and shall not recant, since to act counter to one’s conscience is neither beneficial nor honourable.”

The Emperor, who understood neither Latin nor German, had the words interpreted and, according to one chronicle, is supposed to have asked Luther at this point whether in his opinion the Councils too might be in error.

“The Council of Constance,” Luther replied, “decided against clear and lucid texts of the Holy Scriptures”—with these words pointing a warning finger, as it were, at his predecessor Huss.

At this point the Emperor rose and left the hall with his retinue. Eck, who had just embarked upon a debate, was forced to stop by the Emperor’s departure. Luther, who had hoped for a great debate, now suddenly saw himself disappointed, alone, without an opponent. And it was then that he said in a low voice as though to himself: “Here I stand. I cannot waver. God help me, Amen.”<sup>1</sup>

Noise and tumult as the meeting suddenly breaks up. Crowds applauding the monk, torches casting weird shadows on the steps, and from the Spanish horsemen at the court-gates a cry: “To the stake,

<sup>1</sup> “*Hier stehe ich. Ich kann nicht anders. Gott helfe mir, Amen.*” The simple grandeur and rhythm of these famous German words are lost in English.—Tr.

put him to the stake ! ” When Luther finally is in the street once more, underneath the stars—for it is April and night has fallen—he throws up his arms and cries out in a voice ringing with relief : “ I have come through ! I have come through ! ”

## 7

THE WARTBURG is a place of romance, full of music, sinister yet homely, German through and through ; and whoever to-day climbs its hill, between beech trees and ivy, feels caught up in songs and ballads. Even then, around 1500, legends were wafted through the halls and forests, and the lonely monk, pondering before the fireplace of a winter evening, may have heard in the flames faint echoes of the love songs of Walther, the minnesinger who had sat here three centuries before ; or he may have recalled the battle songs of the warring knights ; or Master Eckhart and the heavenly yearnings of Saint Elizabeth ; for all these had here lived, striven, sung.

Luther too sang. The entire summer of this year, begun so tumultuously, he spent in dreams of devotion, emitting paeans in praise of the Holy Virgin, pondering the psalms—and writing down his thoughts, as was his wont. In between he pondered. What had happened to him ?

On that night, when he had returned to his inn relieved and exhausted, when all crowded around him, only one man had had the sense to bring him what he needed most. This was the Duke of Brunswick, who sent him a pitcher of beer. Luther, filled with distrust of the treacherous world, did not drink until he had asked the messenger whether the beverage came from the foreigners. Did they not sound from all the streets—the whisperings of rebellion ? Four hundred knights had demonstrated against tyrants and priests before the house of the bishop, now the Emperor’s residence. They cried “ *Bundschuh !* ” (lace-shoe), the slogan of the revolting peasants, and the next day they posted printed leaflets on the walls with the legend : “ Woe unto the land whose king is but a boy ! ”

Inside the hall on the day after Luther’s appearance the Electors sat and listened to the Emperor as he read an edict in which it was demanded of the princes that they should surrender Luther as soon as his safe-conduct

expired. At first the princes remained silent; later, however, the more progressive ones among them voiced opposition and declared that they would ignore this Edict of Worms.

Everyone felt in those days that the people stood behind the monk, and the princes sought to gain his support in their struggles for their privileges. They sought to interpose him as a buffer between people and Emperor, to utilize the man of conscience for partisan purposes. By every means they tried to win his favour. They sent their chancellor to his quarters; an archbishop even invited him to his table and sought to prevail upon the monk to submit to a Council of the Church. Luther thought of Huss and shook his head. He felt sure of himself now and the threat of outlawry rested lightly on him. He could not banish from his mind the picture of the youthful Emperor who had sat there, his lips parted, and whom he had regarded as a lamb.

As Luther walked to and fro in the castle garden, the images of the busy world receded in his memory—the hot crowded hall, the torches, the fat, smiling heads of the clerics, the angry faces of the Spanish horsemen, the ardent glances of the students crowding around him, even the shrewd expression on the face of his own prince, who had saved him. For when he had reached Thuringia on the way back to Wittenberg, still under the protection of his safe-conduct, he saw himself suddenly surrounded by horsemen while passing through the woods. He took fright, but the soldiers laughed—they were Saxon mercenaries, charged by the prince with bringing Luther to the safety of the Wartburg.

Slowly the dreamlike images that hovered before him receded—the Emperor, the State, public affairs—and rejoicing in his heart; he re-emerged as what he really was, a poet and a searcher after God who had too long been repressed. Action, struggle, glory—things that had briefly gone to his head as happens to every thinker—all these once more faded into the background, and the great tranquillity to which his heart and mind were attuned, which he had sought as a student, found in the monastery, and sought anew again and again, soothingly invaded his fervent heart. May came and June, and soon the summer was full upon him. We know that Luther, like an abducted prince, spent his time between music and roses, in prayer and writing. Autumn had broken when he opened the Greek Bible of Erasmus one day to render the sacred original into his beloved German.

Anyone who has studied the spirit of this magnificent language, from Walther von der Vogelweide to Goethe, can speak of Luther's Bible only with the deepest emotion. It was perhaps Martin Luther's greatest



achievement. If we envision history without him, Huss, Zwingli and Calvin would still remain. There are, indeed, grave, and even tragic, consequences of Luther's work that endure to this day, casting their shadows over the entirety of German history.

But none of Luther's fellows even attempted anything like the German translation of the New Testament which he made in the winter of 1521-1522 on the Wartburg. This was not the first but in fact the twenty-first version, though the first twenty all bear a strong resemblance. It was the first one, however, to come directly from the Greek. For the time being only this New Testament appeared, in the following autumn, and not until twelve years later did Luther offer his entire German Bible.

It was the blending of peasant and poet that gave birth to this masterpiece. "Look the people in the face," Luther later advised his students, for that is what he himself had always done. It was as though a wise gardener had come to a half-scorched flower-bed, bringing it back to life with artificial rain. Luther showed himself as what he really was above all else—an orator, a teacher and a poet, the most sensuous who ever wore the cassock, though he lived without women for twenty years.

The most striking proof of the originality of Luther's creation is furnished by the fact that the German people have utterly forgotten his achievement. No one remembers that in his daily speech, a simile grown commonplace, a saying, a proverb that has lost its strangeness—that all these derive from Luther's book.

In all likelihood this was Luther's happiest time. He was alone, yet in the best company ; he was a prisoner, yet free to shape his day between garden and chamber ; he had no one to answer to, no one to reproach, nothing to decide ; he was removed into a world where faith and writing, the Holy Land and Germany, were in wondrous harmony.

But the turmoil of the world which he had aroused soon impinged upon him once more. The burning of his books, the imperial edict of ostracism—"Luther, more a devil than a man, destroys all order"—these had been followed by a renewed traffic in indulgences in Saxony, and worse. The cry that had first been raised that night in Worms had in many regions of Germany given rise to revolts, though these were at first of an intellectual nature. For the first time the voice of the people was heard, for the first time it broke through—a people enthralled, never asked for its opinion ; consisting of two Estates, the knights and the peasants, hungry and without hope ; a Reich that had always been divided into tribes torn between the various parties, the playthings of princely greed ; all Christendom ruled by proud priests beyond the

Alps, who needed gold to translate into power, art, enjoyment ; and all this continuing for centuries. The German character is capable of so much greater patience and suffering, forbearance and obedience, than that of any other people in the world—but when that character bursts its bonds it flies into raging savagery without warning.

The people now broke into many churches, abolishing mass, destroying the Holy Communion, tearing the pictures from the walls. Monks and nuns deserted the monasteries and convents and contracted marriages. They discarded the Bible with its contradictions, sought God in Nature, performed the rites of baptism upon adults who alone could grasp its meaning. And all these things were rampant to a far greater extent in Saxony, where the wise Elector was asking himself whether he had not committed a great blunder with his tolerance of Luther. When Luther now sent him a polemic against the traffic of indulgences, the Elector hesitated to publish it—and now a new tone reached his ears.

For Luther, safe in the Wartburg, felt himself challenged to a second struggle, more after his nature than the first. A devout man of the faith who had but slowly developed into a protestant, Luther was altogether a man of ingrained obedience who hated all show of violence when it came to acting in public affairs. The fear that never left him all his life after the terrible impressions of his youth—the fear he had felt of his parents, then of his prior, and finally of God—now assailed him in the face of rising revolution. He could tell himself with a pure conscience that he had never desired all this. Did not even the city council of Wittenberg send for him as though for a magician, to quench the flame he had kindled ? With alarm the solitary monk, wrapped in his thoughts and writings—a carefully guarded man whose whereabouts were unknown—saw what was happening outside in his name. Now he cast off all fear, for the preservation of the existing order was at stake ; rebellion had to be stemmed. He wrote to his prince :

“ All that can be surrendered to violence is my wretched body. Should God not wish to preserve me, my head is little compared to Christ. This cause can be neither counselled nor aided by the sword. God alone must here prevail, without benefit of man’s care and labour.”

Yet at that very moment the writer girded himself with his sword, left his refuge, and rode straightway for Wittenberg.

At this, the loftiest moment of his life, Luther should have died. No longer a monk, but a knight like the one painted by Dürer between Death and Devil, Luther rode through the thick Thuringian woods, dressed in a brown doublet, a little red cap on his head, the sword at his

left, the new Bible in his saddlebag—an outlaw exposed to every form of assault. Two Swiss students have left a description of their encounter with him in an inn outside Jena. They kept looking at him and listening to him, though at first they did not recognize him. "His eyes were black and deep, flashing and dark like stars, that one could scarcely look into them." The strange knight put aside his Hebrew book and questioned them searchingly, exhibiting serene self-possession and a marked sense of humour. He did not reveal his identity and when asked about Dr. Luther replied that the reformer was likely soon to come to Wittenberg. All in all, here was supreme self-control, resolute but without a trace of impatience.

It took Luther eight sermons from the pulpit to calm the waves of revolt in Saxony, and he prevailed upon the Elector to issue a decree to the effect that the churches must obey constituted authority, thereby quickly replacing the waning power of the Pope with a new power, for fear of a vacuum. This was indeed to the Elector's liking! He praised Luther, for this could only be to his advantage. Soon they were all to gain the upper hand—the princes and the cities—all that meant power and money felt itself strengthened. All the classes that sought to maintain order at once became reconciled to the dangerous man. Princes, nobles, burghers—all the propertied classes—breathed a sigh of relief when amid the rising turmoil Luther turned out to be a loyal citizen, an obedient subject who was willing to place even his own church under secular power.

But at the same time Luther lost the support of the peasants, the knights, and all the discontented. They already had another leader. As at the beginning of all revolutions, the wheels began to spin faster and faster. Was not this Thomas Münzer in Zwickau a better man?

Münzer, Luther's junior by seven years, had also been a schoolmaster and preacher. He had escaped and then been banished. A migrant preacher and revolutionary firebrand, he had at first been an adherent of Luther, only to forsake him, from ambition as much as from indignation. Now Münzer was inciting the multitudes in biblical language against the Bible, declaring Jesus to have been a great prophet, supreme among the sons of God, but the doctrine of his death for mankind to be "voluptuous." Right here on earth was the kingdom of God and heavenly bliss, and even a heathen might be a righteous believer. Down with classes! Let there be the brotherhood of man, a league of all Europe, a salute to the heathen and the Turks! Down with the Pope of Wittenberg who knelt before authority! "Wherefore dost thou call

them Most Serene Highnesses ? Is not this title seemly only for Christ, while they are dregs of usury, thievery and robbery, treating all creatures as their chattels ? ”

Luther hurled back the missiles, calling Münzer a drunkard bereft of his senses ; but he also allowed himself to be led into reviling the people who followed the rabble-rousers ; he apostrophised them as rabid, unreasoning brutes. Heretofore he had sought to win hearts with forbearance ; now he began to damn all who fell away from him. It is as though one beholds Jesus in Caesarea Philippi, where he changed his tone and began to command.

What prophet has not disappointed his disciples ? Did they not desert even Jesus and Mohammed ? If only for the reason that they are younger, they strive onward ; if only because they have received the grave revelations of the master as a gift, they want more. Who was to inquire into Luther's youth and character, since all the world saw only the man who professed his convictions before Emperor and Reich at the risk of his life ? Luther was forty years old when he began to disappoint so many. For five years he had advanced slowly but steadily. Now that he stood still, he seemed to slip back.

Another blow struck him at the same time : the humanists turned against him ; not, however, for the sake of social revolution. Erasmus, prince of the spirit, who had not withdrawn his support even when Luther had been banned, now turned away. Legally answerable directly to the Emperor, he had publicly avowed his support of the outlawed Luther, banking on his world-wide fame for his safety, and rightly so. Yet he took the precaution of retiring to Basle, lest he be arrested in the Netherlands. Now, while still refusing to write anything against Luther, he grew away in spirit from the reformer.

Thus the philosopher who believed in freedom of will rose against the believer who implored mercy, the man of science and art against the fanatic of the faith, the spirit against passion. The first European rose against the first German of his time—a German who had purveyed the Bible to his people, while pledging the obedience of this people to the princes. It was a great spectacle to see these two profound Bible scholars prove to each other from the same book God's bountiful mercy and arbitrary power.

Yes, despite everything, it was a great epoch when the German people felt stirred by problems of the spirit, when they proved before the world and before history the hidden resources within them. It was a brief epoch, and it never appeared again.

## 8

OF A WINTER, in the hall of his castle, the knight Franz von Sickingen sat with his sons and bondsmen. They were all listening, for Ulrich von Hutten stood before them reading from Luther's new Bible. The ageing Sickingen was now learning the word of God in familiar form. A few runaway monks sat about, one or two with their wives, and the table was laid out with what there was of forbidden writings. And yet the mighty knight hesitated to head the great war against the rich to which the impoverished, fiery, emaciated knight who felt death at his elbow was urging him. The League of West-German Knights had been organized, with Sickingen at the head—he was on rather bad terms with the Emperor at the time. What did they really seek to establish? A form of aristocratic democracy, with the Emperor impotent and the princes dethroned; at heart, it was a system also directed against the cities because these now refused to march with the knights. Sickingen felt that he was not strong enough to go on, and his astrologer had warned him.

With all its good intentions, the League seemed ripe to fall apart. Many forces went into league against Sickingen, who found himself besieged. Standing behind an embrasure, he was felled by a ball (1523). The ailing Hutten, who had been previously sent away by his friend, made his way to Switzerland, knocked in vain at the door of Erasmus, against whom he still managed to write a polemic, and died shortly after Sickingen on an island in Lake Zurich which Zwingli had helped him to reach. He left nothing but his pen and a manuscript, which has since been lost; but his motto has remained: it read: *In Tyrannos!* It has outlasted the centuries; to-day it is once more on the lips of all men of lofty spirit.

With Hutten and Sickingen the last true knights disappeared. Since Sickingen was also the last powerful champion of the poor, the long-planned league of knights, burghers and peasants against princes, Church and nobles became impossible. So the peasants now girded themselves to carry out their revolution alone.

Twelve "peasant rebellions" had risen in recent years, for since 1500 the plight of the peasants had grown intolerable. They had been merely strikes, with moderate demands for fishing and hunting rights and similar privileges. Scaring away his lord's game might cost a peasant his hand,

and the chroniclers confirm that occasionally peasants knelt down to implore their lords to chop off the left hand. That the right hand was chopped off nevertheless constitutes one of those sadistic traits the like of which does not appear in the history of other nations as a characteristic feature. Since money had appeared on the scene, the clerical lords no longer gave turnips and cabbage, butter and milk to their serfs—instead, they sold their produce in the cities. Woods and pastures, once the domain of the peasants, were taken back by the Junkers so that lumber and hay might be sold. The wretched peasants crowded into the cities, where they formed a proletariat that, unlike its ancient counterpart, was not composed of the unsuccessful residue of those who ruled, but arose from a class exploited since the beginning of time.

Thus exposed to starvation, with a deep resentment of their clerical overlords, the peasants encountered the Lutherans, in whose idealistic revolt they found a confirmation of their own indignation, a kind of spiritual atonement for their conscience. Had the peasants of southern Germany at that time broken through the contending classes, they might have achieved a great revolution. But they too were Germans—that is to say, they loved order more than liberty. For this reason they first had a learned man embody their demands in twelve articles and find out whether these articles accorded with the Holy Scriptures. What were the demands of the starving peasants? The abolition of serfdom, of the new services and penalties; return of the communal pasture; election of the priest by the congregation.

The great lords were indignant. They counselled that foreign troops be called in, since the native soldiers of peasant stock could not be trusted in a fight with their brothers; at a later date negotiations should be attempted with the peasants, who were to be lured together and then massacred.

When, in 1525, the revolution broke out in the south, it quickly spread all over Germany. The enemy was at first poorly prepared, the terror was great, and all the owning classes trembled.

All cried that one man alone might mediate—Luther.

There it was once again—the great mission of the reformer! In the first flurry of excitement he actually declared the peasants' twelve demands to be fair, a proper basis for negotiation. In open debates he reproached the princes for their crimes. But the peasant proposal that he should act as arbitrator he refused in alarm, admonishing them to keep the peace. Too late! Thomas Münzer whom Luther hated incited the Thuringian peasants to rebellion and tried to set up a communistic society in

Mülhausen in Thuringia. Although Münzer, taking his stand very close to Luther, had rallied but a small group around himself in the great Peasant Rebellion, Luther took back the principal things he had said, and only three weeks after he had called their demands fair charged the peasants with being "robbers and assassins." This turn in Germany's mightiest leader proved decisive; the owning classes could now point to the first reformer, who had written:

"The common man must be tried in suffering, lest he grow wilful. . . . Wherefore we must not fall asleep here. . . . Here too patience and pity are of no avail. . . . It is time for the sword and not for mercy. Let who can stab, strike, throttle, as one beateth to death a mad dog." Against this sounded the voice of Münzer: "Alas, dear God, the peasants are poor people; they spend their lives toiling over the food on which the insatiable tyrants gorge themselves. . . . The power of the princes is at an end and shall in short be handed over to the common people! The people are hungry!"

But Luther had the ear of the people, not Münzer, who was taken in battle and clung to his creed even on the rack. The peasants lacked leadership, especially when one of the knights, Götz von Berlichingen, deserted their cause. Within a few weeks their cause had been drowned in blood.

There was dreadful revenge! One hangman alone boasted of having executed 1200; no less than 130,000 peasants are supposed to have been killed. A certain Margrave Casimir forbade binding up the wounds of the prisoners whose eyes he had put out. The world of the time was used to murder and cruelty, but the German atrocities were retold with horror, and letters and reports in many languages testify to unprecedented misdeeds, just as in our own days. The final word was written by Melancthon: "For so undisciplined a people as the Germans, serfdom, if anything, is too mild."

Here is a catch-phrase for German history. If the most highly developed Germans could speak of their fellow-countrymen in this vein, if the son of a craftsman could despair of them *en bloc*—how deep must have been the chasm between spirit and State! True Christians, opposed to war, Luther and his followers were yet deeply pervaded by the callousness from which they and their forebears had come. Any urge for revolt was alien to them, and obedience to secular authority was so ingrained in them that, with the exception of Hutten, who after all was an impoverished knight, none of these leading spirits understood his time. Thus this first German revolution was lost because of the lack of

unity between spirit and power—lost like all movements in which these two elements are divided. At the time power, forcing its way through from below, failed because the spirit withdrew in arrogance. To-day power, acting from above, fails because it suppresses the spirit. The two later movements, in which the Germans, in 1848 and 1918, tried to gain their freedom, perished even more rapidly. Thrice the revolution was crushed in Germany ; thrice it conquered in France.

But Luther lost millions of hearts. Indeed, he did something no one could understand : in the midst of the terror of those June weeks of 1525, he married. Käthe—as he called Katherina von Bora after the German fashion—had fled the convent together with eight other nuns, by hiding behind herring barrels. Soon afterwards she had entered into an amour with a Nuremberg citizen, Baumgärtner, who deserted her when his wealthy parents forbade him to marry the runaway nun. Luther, developed to a point where he was resolved to break his vows, was at the time in love with a Fräulein von Schönfeld, but she preferred another man whom she married. In this situation Luther, the rejected suitor, took the jilted woman as his wife. It was all very sudden ; he took her from Cranach's house to the altar. His friends were alarmed. " The nun has brought him round," Melanchthon wrote in Greek to a friend. " His frequent contact with nuns, though he has always remained most virtuous, has softened him, and his feelings too may have caught fire. In this way he seems to have been trapped."

When after the wedding feast they received their friends, according to the custom of the time, on their bridal bed, one friend reports that he was unable to hold back his tears at this spectacle. The stir in Germany was doubly great because Luther had timed this celebration during the height of his fierce struggles. He himself calmly said : " All the angels will laugh and the devils weep." He was forty-two : she was twenty-six.

She is not beautiful in Cranach's portrait, but frank and steadfast. Both spouses seem to have put on weight rapidly. In one sermon Luther wrote down this strangely vivid confession : " In the first year of matrimony a man hath strange thoughts. He sitteth across the table, thinking : once thou wert alone, now there be twain. If he perchance awaken in bed he seeth by his side two braids where before there were none." A year after the wedding Käthe gave birth to her first son, who was followed by four more children. Luther joked much with his wife in letters. She was an excellent householder, building pig-sties, husbanding his money, and nursing him when he was assailed by melancholia. Music alone is supposed to have lifted him from his unending depressions. Since she



read nothing, he promised his wife a gift, if she should have read the whole Bible by a certain time. His affection for her grew with the years.

In the last twenty years of his life which now began there was one more form of edification for Luther. At the age of forty he began to write and compose songs. He began with the Psalms. He had rendered them into German prose for his lectures and now he recast them into verse. Then came the hymns, in which he has never found a peer ; he tried them on the lute and then gave them to his congregation to sing.

The finest trait in Luther's development, now rapidly declining, is this growing intimacy with music. Music became his refuge from deep inner discord. It is in music that the Germans find themselves ; all their inherent and often carefully cultivated perplexities, their inward lack of ease, their uncertainty, are resolved, and their imagination begins to ring out into the world. Luther, who never grasped the meaning of beauty and thus became a disturbing element in the Renaissance, said that the ear rather than the eye was the organ of a Christian for grasping the invisible.

Luther carried his inner struggles into music as he did into everything. They perpetually revolved around the question of grace, and left him restless between hope and fear. He never envied any man the balance of an Erasmus, but he sought what he lacked in intangible music. He rejected one composer for the reason that his music consisted only of rules, without freedom and grace. In music too, he said, grace must accompany the laws of harmony, inspiration must accompany mathematics, though this latter too rested in the hand of God. From Luther onward, the greatness of German music might almost have been foreseen. For in the German character the sense of order mingles with the surrender to imagination, mathematics meets magic, and both blend into a music which leaves that of other nations behind.

At about this time Luther also began to invent fables which he related over the wine. They soon grew into tales for the people. All of them are full of a rising humour ; it seems that as he grew grey his passion and tension subsided, giving him greater balance. Felicitations, conundrums, always in rhyme ; always in vivid images—one could almost draw them on paper. In these later days Luther grew to be a great caricaturist with words. The most astonishing feature is that everything was intended for the congregation—it was the orator, the teacher in him that did the rhyming. He never composed a single line about his private happiness and sorrow.

## 9

THERE is no space here to tell of Zwingli and Calvin. Their strange debates in the form of theological questions seem to resolve solely around the Holy Communion and its meaning, whereas actually profound differences in faith, in German race, and above all in character were behind them. The healthy, strapping Swiss with his clear and happy childhood, the sharp practical Frenchman—both retained a certain suspicion toward the slow-moving Luther who never seemed to be quite attuned to himself and by this very quandary proved that he was a true German. Luther and Zwingli, nevertheless, had something in common that set them apart from Calvin—namely, their music. But even this was but a worldly enjoyment for the valiant Swiss, who himself practised it on five instruments, while in Luther's dreams music was balm to the soul.

In the wake of the Peasant Rebellion the ancient idea of Anabaptism, to which even Master Eckhart three hundred years before had come close, was now revived—by artisans without programme, God-seekers who distinguished different degrees of faith, who believed in non-Biblical illumination. Some wanted a second baptism for adults, others the restriction of property in favour of the poor, in the sense of primitive Christianity. To-day thousands of Baptists practise delayed baptism, but in those days it was a revolution. Once again Luther inveighed against a sect whose pure spirit must have been related to his own mood. He did so only because he always defended authority against innovators.

Before this, Emperor Charles had tried to reduce the Lutherans—now called Protestants because of a protest they had submitted to the Reichstag—to a moderate programme of their faith; for he needed peace in Germany. Since their leader was proscribed by law, the Emperor could not ask him to negotiate; so he invited Luther's most famous disciple to give a profession of his faith in Augsburg. It was an amazing scene and an astounding victory! The same Emperor who nine years before had outlawed the founder of this movement now listened for two hours as the same profession was declaimed before him, the friend of the Pope.

When the Protestant princes and classes joined in a league—called the Smalkaldian League, after a small town—which attracted all manner

of foreign States, the Emperor took a second step toward reconciliation. He sent a Papal Legate to the heretic with the question whether Luther would attend a Council of the Church.

"Why do you have yourself shaved so early?" the Wittenberg barber asked Luther.

"I am to wait on the emissary of His Holiness, wherefore I must deck myself out, that I may look young. Then the Legate will think: Aye, the devil, that Luther be still so young and hath done so much harm—what may he not yet do!"

"But your best clothes! He will resent that, Herr Doctor."

"That is why I am doing it. That is how one must deal with serpents and foxes."

After this matutinal exchange, as reported by the barber, Luther treated the Legate with open arrogance. About this time he also wrote against the Edict of Worms, comparing its author to a hog. Luther remained as courageous and humorous as this just so long as it was merely the Pope whom he was facing.

But, facing secular authority, he grew more reactionary year by year. "If constituted authority say that two and five makes eight, thou must then believe it against thine own knowledge. So must the service of war and the sword be regarded with manly eyes, though it come hard and do monstrous deeds. Then will it prove of itself that it is truly a divine service, as needful and useful to the world as eating and drinking." If a friend asked him his reasons, he pointed to the Bible which mentioned constituted authority but said nothing about Popes, monks and nuns. Such distortion of his own much-beloved text is possible to a German who wishes to obey the State!

Scholars had heretofore declared constituted authority to be ungodly, dangerous to the soul's salvation; but Luther now boasted that it was he who had first taught the Germans how princes might serve God. Thus he returned to the feudal lords the spiritual weapons which Charlemagne had taken from them, explained to the citizen why he must hold aloof from all public affairs, leaving them all to his prince. By confirming the Protestant princes in a power which their ancestors had merely usurped and which had already half-slipped from the hands of their fathers, he opposed every popular desire for liberty and laid the basis for the concept of "Throne and Altar," for priests behind the throne, for selection of priests by the Junkers and great landlords—concepts upon which later the whole of Prussian history was to rest. Three hundred years later Protestantism was called the "religion of the limited

subject mind," and this characterization goes straight back to its founder.

Luther's devotion to State and power went so far that he gave permission for a dual marriage to the Landgrave of Hesse, a fiery professor of the new doctrine. This was a dispensation which the Pope at best granted only for divorce. Luther justified it by insisting that it was not forbidden by the Bible. His condition was that the matter should remain secret. When it became known, nevertheless, there was a great uproar. The self-same Landgrave had made bigamy punishable by death. The self-same Luther had fought against bigamy among the Anabaptists. The Emperor smiled and soon managed to make political capital of this dilemma.

Thus in his old age Luther was still torn between fear and defiance, obedience and self-confidence.

By that time all northern Germany had turned Protestant, but now it was a cold political party, a social institution, and the old man in the centre had long lost his momentum. He was overloaded with work—lectures, sermons, exegesis, translations, opinions, polemics. He had become a party leader, a committee chairman, an editor,—he who once resembled a prophet. There were four or five sects in Germany, each fighting the other, with no real leader. Luther abandoned all he had once defended. In his prime he had publicly paid high tribute to the Jews, but now he suddenly made them the butt of his mockery. He discarded the art of debate, of which he had been a great practitioner, preparing now to issue decrees.

But the full force of the ire and mockery of his old age was reserved for the Germans. Only the judgments of Goethe and Nietzsche can serve as a comparison when he writes :

"There is no help for a nation where each wilfully pursues his special path. Things will fare ill, once I am no longer here. I do not like to prophesy, for my predictions have a way of coming true. . . . This barbarous, truly bestial nation, these wretched, unregenerate swine, half devils, half men !"

His last years were darkened by the death of one of his children and also by an ailment which revived his old paroxysms. But he resumed his poetry. He wrote affectionate letters to his wife, one of them addressed to : "My dearly beloved housewife Katherina Lutherin, doctress, keeper of the hogs, and what other accomplishments she may be possessed of"—she had succeeded in turning hog-breeding on a little farm taken over from his brother into a thriving business. On his deathbed

at night he said his prayers, not in his own German version, but in Latin, as he had learned them as a boy in this very city. When the minister bent over his ear and asked in a loud voice whether he clung to his doctrine, he returned a distinct yes.

Never was there such a revolutionary against his own will. This man who had such firm trust in his inner visions, who never wavered when it came to affirming his inner voices—this strong and courageous man of God was destined to become a leader to a people that had none, that rejected its traditional and dynastic rulers. And Luther had seen with alarm how thought can turn into action, faith into desire. It was as though a child in a dead calm lights a small fire to warm himself, and a sudden storm springs up and sets the forest alight. For Luther could look upon the revolution only as a pernicious fire. Driven by nature and training to fear his superiors, he now overdid obedience, as though to atone for a sin he had never committed. As in the monastery he had accused himself of things he merely feared, so, swept to the crest of life, he rejected with all the force at his command the power he had in no sense sought, tossing it into the laps of princes whom he had recognized in moments of illumination as “serpents and foxes.”

Betraying the spirit to the State, ethics to power, Luther became the tragic prototype of the German.

## 10

AT THIS same time the German spirit was radiantly rising in immortal works. Germany's struggles against the Pope are forgotten ; between the sects a peace prevails which is now only rarely confused by political motives. But in eternal youth there shine from the walls of museums all over the world the pictures of the four great painters whom German genius offered to the world about this time : Cranach the colourful, Dürer the profound, Grünewald the ecstatic, Holbein the portraitist. All were contemporaries of Luther and Charles V ; all their lives are intermingled ; all of them came from southern Germany and were the sons of poor craftsmen or painters. Learning their art from their fathers and handing it down to their sons, they represent the true German dynasties whose documents are not marked by seals of gold but by the

stamp of genius. For the men who even to-day signify in the world the glory of the German Renaissance—artists, clerics, heretics, humanists—were all born humbly, unknown. Not a single one comes from castles and palaces.

Lucas Cranach (1472-1553) includes, in time only, the lives of all the others, for he never equalled them in perfection, the value of his work lying in its abundance. Cranach's bold and aggressive character might have unfolded equally well in fighting and debate, he might well have become a soldier or a preacher like Frundsberg or Zwingli. Painting was never enough for him. At the age of fifty he purchased an apothecary's shop, and at sixty he became burgomaster.

In this restless spirit of his he actually painted everything—saints, goddesses, portraits, tournaments, working on canvas and plaster, in copper and wood, printing his woodcuts on his own press, instructing his son and ruling his students, creating a work as varied as that of Titian and Rubens, and astonishing to posterity in its richness. Energy and vision—two qualities the Germans generally keep separate—he alloyed as in bell-metal, sounding his great bell far across the German land. The Germans were taken by his pictures, for they are full of phantoms, of droll and uncanny spirits.

One feature of his painting, most astonishing in a German—something that no one had ever painted or sung before Cranach—was the physical attraction of his women, which becomes even provocative in some of his pictures. Here was none of the refinement that sets aglow the nudes of Giorgione and Correggio, nor the ponderous gravity with which Rubens invested his. Here was the exciting play of women, wise in the arts of love; looking at his pictures one understands the wiles with which the ladies of the age of chivalry fired their admirers. From here lines branch out into every field of German art, opening up aspects of the German character which the Germans are fond of characterizing as French.

Cranach proved himself a man even in old age. When, after Luther's death, the successor of Frederic the Wise was beaten and taken prisoner by the Emperor, his seventy-five-year-old painter voluntarily followed him into captivity, accompanying him from one prison to another; and when the octogenarian at last saw his master freed, he died by his patron's side.

Dürer (1471-1528) was the son of a Hungarian whose family name was Ajtos, meaning "door," and no one knows whence came the grandfather who moved to a hamlet eight miles from Wardein to engage

in goldsmithery. His son, also a worker in gold, wandered from Hungary to the Netherlands and did not come to Nuremberg until he was thirty. There he called himself Dürer, and at the age of forty married his master craftsman's daughter, who was fifteen years old and who became the mother of Albrecht Dürer.

One might count Dürer among the German emperors, for he shared their fate. A problem character of Nordic gloom, he was by temperament and gravity thoroughly German, but the South fascinated him and drew him off his course, nor did he ever quite find his way back to himself. His self-portraits are milestones of his Roman pilgrimages. "Dürer," said Goethe, "would have become a different artist had he lived in Italy."

While still a boy, learning to forge rings as his father's pupil, he drew a picture of himself, his silver crayon rendering the child's image in the mirror, slight, with the curious pointing finger of a prophet. Innocence and talent are blended on the magic paper, as though a child prodigy were playing Mozart. Even at twenty-two he was an ungainly youth, round-shouldered, hawk-nosed, with large ears and hands and dishevelled hair, but with a touching air of embarrassment, like a model seeking to conceal her secrets. But now Italy opened to the young journeyman. He saw Venice and all that made this city, in about 1500, a paradise for painters—the landscape and the palaces, the colours, the pictures and the sea, the pride of the artists and the fabulous story of the East. He saw this beauty, and fell into the German passion for foreign peoples and latitudes, that wanderlust which another German wanderer later thus expressed in verse and music: "Where thou art not, there is thy joy." Was it any wonder that the young man from Nuremberg tried to appear to himself as an Italian nobleman?

The masterpiece in the Prado, painted when he was twenty-seven, shows him a completely changed man. His bearing is self-conscious; his hair is carefully twisted into curls; his ears are invisible; the narrow sensual mouth is framed in a beard; his throat is adorned; he is dressed in precious robes and a fine silk cap, his hands folded in an elegant gesture, while behind him a bit of foreign landscape looks in through the window, everything truly bathed in beauty. A little later, back at home, he had regained his self-confidence. He painted himself in the famous full-face Christ-like picture, dressed in dark expensive furs, his locks arranged even more carefully, his expression now virile and inscrutable. Nothing is glossed over—even the long finger from his childhood returns in the centre line of the picture, drawing the eye.

This picture, of statuesque effect, shows perhaps the finest marriage of North and South achieved by German genius before Goethe. The air of deep contemplation that becomes almost demoniac in "Melancholy" and "Knight, Death and Devil"—this co-ordination of great things with little, this defiance of logic with which he symbolized thought—show him to be a truly German master who but rarely—and not always with success in his nudes—pictured what he had dreamed beyond the Alps.

When this great brooder left the workshop in Nuremberg he could find another artist at work a few steps away, a man who had achieved a deeper harmony with himself and to whom in all German art only Bach corresponds. This was Peter Vischer, the "brazier" (1460-1529). He came from one of those dynasties whose rise from handicraft to art was as slow as that of the Fuggers from silk-weaving to banking for the Emperor. He stood in the midst of closed ranks, for eleven long years hammering and casting, together with his five sons, the tomb of Saint Sebaldus, and afterwards the giant statues for the tomb of Maximilian in Innsbruck, always giving life to whatever his Promethean hammer touched. To him it had been given to reconcile freedom and grace, sent to him by the South liked winged messengers, with his own mighty German gravity. Even four centuries later the eye cannot wholly encompass the richness of these bronze figures. Down below on one of the narrow sides of the tomb of Sebaldus, immediately opposite the Saint himself, Vischer pictured himself in leather cap and apron, bearded, calm, self-composed.

Of Matthias Grünewald himself we know nothing of importance. His work consists essentially of a single piece. Nothing ever written in Germany on wall, wood or canvas can match in visionary power the Altar of Isenheim, a shrine with four sidepieces. This master organizes his work no differently from Dante. Before opening the heart of paradise, he leads the faithful through the Inferno and the Passion. Between satanic and divine magic, he places suffering.

The beginning is suffering. The outer pair of wings, seen on weekdays, relate the story of the Crucifixion. Night pervades everything. There is no storm, but great darkness, a stillness in the black air, a terrible calm. A cross looms huge, not on a hill, but from a mountain plain behind which the eye gradually begins to make out a valley in blue-green. Bluish green like the landscape and but sparsely illuminated, a body seems to moulder on the cross—a body that has barely ceased to live. There is no trace of the divine left here, no lofty spiritual force as with Dürer—



only suffering. These limbs scream aloud in the stillness. From its welts and scars the emaciated body emits a phosphorescent light into the night. Bluish-red blood drips from the wounds. Even in death, fingers and toes twitch as in spasm. A wretched cloth covers the loins. Wearily the sagging body tugs at the shackling wood which one can hear creaking in the joints.

At His feet to the left kneels the wordly follower, with golden hair gracing the light red of her dress, praying aloft in beautiful gesture, naïve despite all her knowledge. But behind her, sinking backward, stands Mary, the Mother, all-knowing despite her purity. John supports her. A white nun, pale and deathly, she stands there, still as the night that witnesses the terrible event, while the scarlet-coloured cloak of the lean boy who holds her shatters the stillness. Nothing in the world casts a stronger spell upon the mind than the sight of this chalk-white, wordlessly swooning Madonna.

The three to the left are opposed on the right by a single figure. It is the other John. Before him, profoundly moving in its godly whiteness, the little lamb with the tiny cross, painlessly pouring forth its blood into the golden cup—a bare pace from the blue lumps of the feet of the crucified. All the symbolic force avoided in Him is here given in poignant arabesque—the parable of suffering at the feet of the sufferer.

With grandiose gesture the Baptist points to the Greater One who follows him. Four and a lamb stand before the soundless night; their screams have no force—they do not sound; the tidings are of a vast silence. But the Baptist, unmoved, clear as one who saw it coming, one who is great and whole before the terrible corpse—the Baptist speaks aloud the metallic words: It is seemly that He wax while I wane.

This is the first vision.

On a Sunday, the wings of the august shrine swing open. The great largo of the Passion is followed by the capriccio of Hell.

In wild jagged forest, Saint Anthony is tempted by the demons. His long white beard falls across the blue cloak that enlivens the crimson of his sleeves. A dreadful tumult of unholy creatures hurls itself upon the aged man laid low.

With their jerky, marionette-like gestures they seem bound, obedient to an invisible spirit. But the other spirit is visible. In the bluish air above there hovers, very small, God the Father in rose-yellow aureole.

Between Passion and demonism Grünewald has placed the divine. Turning back the tablet of the devils and solitude, there is the fourfold radiance of the faith.

In the left wing he now begins to sound the song of songs of the Annunciation. An erotic fluid flows through the full-blown girl. Beside her burns the scarlet of a curtain, as though its streaming folds hold all joy.

The great angel hovers nigh. It is Eros, red-blue cloak moving over golden robe, with the locks of desire, the finger of choice. With resolute eye he points to the girl, trembling in wondrous awe. Only a Teuton could let the swords of love flash in eyes that are so cold.

In the dual centrepiece rises the Gloria of the blessed Child. Out of the gloom of a Gothic tabernacle emerge singing, music-making angels. More and more the bluish shadows give way to reddish, red, scarlet glories—up to the radiance of grace that pours down upon the transfigured Virgin and Child. From a bluish Leonardo landscape they shoot down—these rays of the Lord. He himself is shrouded in necromantic yellow haze, surrounded by a huge aura.

The inner right wing carries the Resurrection, the boldest image dreamed by this visionary.

Before a purple rock fissure against which stands the stone sarcophagus three heavily armoured soldiers stagger in the face of the vision. Motionless, without wings or power, as though magnetically attracted, the Magian rises up before them effortlessly. In the bluish light the great shroud wherein they buried Him flutters earthward. The radiant crown continues without transition into a kind of giant moon-bow that vibrates about the whole figure, light blue at first, then darker, then astral blue, in concentric circles until it merges with the greenish-black night. Every colour shines in this immense spectacle. Everything has its own luminosity—the body is translucent like alabaster. Two small points alone seem to control this miracle of self-luminous colours—the clear black ice-cold eyes of the Risen.

When after years of work Grünewald laid aside his brush and stepped before his work, alone—that was a great moment in German history, comparable to those when Bach finished the *Art of the Fugue* and Goethe his *Faust*. As an individual work of national painting, the Isenheim Altar may be called the German counterpart to Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel.

Hans Holbein (1497-1543) holds the same relation to Dürer that Mozart does to Beethoven. Like Mozart he attained fame abroad at an early age and died young. Like Mozart he began as a master and made his progress on a lofty level, perfect and tranquil. But the scope of his perfection is more limited—he attained it only in portraiture. In that field, however, he surpassed even Titian, Raphael and Rembrandt.

Holbein was the greatest portraitist of all time, comparable only to Plutarch.

How did this come about? For once, genius permitted itself a divine whim, giving to a past-master of brush and crayon profound insight into men. In the similar case of Shakespeare, we find reason to look for the sources of this gift in the broad background of contemporary life and drama; but in the case of Holbein it almost defies comprehension how the son of an Augsburg painter, fleeing the oppressive parental abode in early youth, could from pure intuition penetrate so deeply into the souls of all the men and women his art projected on the canvas.

The secret of Holbein's portraits lies in their isolation. Almost all of his subjects are painted without background, without properties of any kind. Only a few show insignia, evidently demanded by the models. He gave them fine dresses, but without pretension, to make the heads, even more conspicuous, for the head alone was to speak for the soul. He did not even allow his women the graceful effect of throat and bosom. True, beauty attracted him, and ugly heads, such as are so often found with Velasquez and Rembrandt and with Dürer in his later period, are almost wholly absent from Holbein's gallery. His people all look handsome, because they are shown in their most soulful moments; Holbein painted each person just as God had visualized him. He tolerated no pose. This is all the more astonishing, since his career led him into that great world where everyone sought to cut a figure, where money was spent to enhance dignity.

Thus we understand why all Holbein's men, and his women too, resemble each other—also resembling the master, for what portraitist or historian does not betray himself in the figures he creates? Here are chancellors and merchants, philosophers and lord mayors, kings and masters of the hunt, young dandies and aged physicians, painters and clerics; here are the wives of commoners, ladies in waiting, and queens, Germans and English—yet all of them, strangers to each other, share that deep soulful look. Here was a master, looking deeply into the human mind and projecting it on the canvas with a force verging on the mysterious; as though a master clockmaker opened the cover of a timepiece, instantly grasping the principle of the mechanism and then closing it again, forevermore knowing just what made it go—all in a few seconds, all at first glance. That is why none of the people whom Holbein portrays laugh or cry. They live, they feel—indeed, they feel so strongly that all trivialities, all passion, their rank, money, ambition, sensuality—all this is shed, and they offer themselves to posterity at the

highest level fate granted them. Holbein had gone to Basle at the age of eighteen, because he had heard that a printer there was reproducing drawings; but the city afforded him little support. One man alone, Erasmus, recognized young Holbein. It was a great moment in German history when the greatest painter immortalized the greatest thinker, the young genius painting the head of the famous old man. In return Erasmus sent Holbein to London with a priceless recommendation, opening up a career such as no German painter ever found at home.

Thomas More, the mighty Chancellor of Henry VIII and a friend of Erasmus, had his portrait painted by the young German, and soon London society followed, all of them, from the King down, sitting for the fashionable new artist.

Holbein's fame grew, and so did his fees, yet he never flattered his subjects. Even the King he painted in all his obesity, just as he was; yet Henry appointed Holbein court painter.

Holbein painted but few self-portraits, the last one at the age of forty-five, showing himself in greatest simplicity, merely as one of the many whose souls he had fathomed. Immediately afterwards he died in London—like Titian, probably of the plague.

While the hands of the great painters and the heart of the Great Reformer were carrying the fame of the German name into the world, the greatest mind of the century was preparing a revolution that was even more far-reaching. Like Kant and Beethoven, Copernicus (1473-1543) was only half a German, the son of a Pole and a mother who may have been German, although she too is claimed by the Poles as their own. All his knowledge, moreover, was acquired in Italy, where he studied all four learned professions. He was past thirty when he devoted himself entirely to astronomy, and he needed almost another thirty years to prove to himself by unending experiment and calculation what he had first recognized through intuition—all this a hundred years before the first telescope. He caused the greatest upheaval experienced and aroused by any human mind since Ptolemy. The sun stands still, but the earth and the other planets revolve around the sun.

It was a conception that went back to antiquity—the Pythagoreans had taught it—but the Bible had followed Aristotle and Ptolemy. Here is a curiosity of world history: The pantheistic pagans looked upon their earth as a star, while the spiritualized Christians, with their dream of heaven proclaimed the earth the firm centre of their world. What satanic terror must have struck the heart of an illuminate thinker when he recognized Bible dogma as error, a premise of the faith as untenable!

But the revolution of the German intellect gave Copernicus courage, and thus, a man nearing sixty, he dared to publish his dangerous discoveries in provisional form. If the Church should choose to excommunicate him—well, he would be in the good company of Luther and Hutten !

But what actually happened ? The Pope, to whom the shrewd canon had dedicated his book to provide against any eventuality, asked friends and cardinals to his garden to hear a lecture on the new doctrine ; and after him thirteen more Popes failed to prohibit the work. Luther and Melancthon, on the other hand, instantly opposed the Copernican teachings, for the whole truth and nothing but the truth was contained in Scripture ; and in the One Hundred and Fourth Psalm it said : “ *Terra in aeternam stat.* ” Thus even here the revolutionary of the faith fought his fellow-revolutionary of the spirit, as he had fought the revolutionaries of action.

## 11

CHARLES V was the last German emperor to have himself crowned in Italy. Milan, Naples, Burgundy fell into his hands again, and since at about the same time Cortés had invaded Mexico, twenty-five-year-old Charles had become the most powerful man in the world. Had not the Turks been advancing in Hungary by this time, Charles would have easily gained the upper hand over the German Reformation.

But a precious piece of paper that has been preserved—something like a leaf from a diary—tells us how difficult in fact was the situation of this all-powerful dictator. It was written by a young emperor who ruled half the world.

For Charles soon found himself alone. The counsellors of his youth had died. He had but few women and no friends, his festivities were rich, imperial and cold. From 1522 to 1529 he resided in Spain, had become half a Spaniard, being addressed as “ Your Sacred Imperial Majesty.” He loved the showy splendour of the Renaissance, and begged the Pope to send him as Nuncio the man who was the greatest expert on the new customs—Castiglione, the man who had written the *Cortigiano*. It was at this time that he began to build the palace at Granada that was never completed, its Roman fanfare superseding the romanticism of graceful Moorish columns, pools and courtyards. At the same time

he spent half the day, or, as some write, all day, in council. The things that passed through his mind are revealed in this monologue from his own hand :

How hard it is to decide everything, even though I strip myself down to the bones ! I see and sense that time passes and that we shall soon pass with it, yet I do not care to pass without leaving behind an honourable memory of myself, whereas until now I have achieved nothing to do me honour. For these and many other reasons I see nothing to keep me from undertaking great deeds nor anything to keep me, with God's aid, from growing more powerful to enjoy in peace and tranquillity what it has pleased Him to give me. The best way to improve my situation would be a march to Italy. One might raise doubts on account of the money and the regency in the land and for other reasons. To avoid that, I see no better way than speeding my arrangements to marry the Infanta of Portugal and to bring her here soon. The money which she will bring me should be as much in cash as possible, and I must consider whether or not it would be a good thing to discuss the question of the spice trade at the same time.

The Emperor is talking to himself. As a man of the world, he seeks his own advantage, and as a suitor he considers the revenues from the colonies ; yet three great motives emerge from his soliloquy—faith, ambition and love, as was soon to be proved. Charles was a devout man, no different from Luther. Whenever sudden news reached him, be it good or bad, he first sought to compose himself in prayer.

His marriage to Isabella of Portugal, immortalized in Titian's canvas, solemnized in Seville, brought him thirteen years of perfect harmony, spent almost entirely at her side and ended only by her death. Nor was its memory overshadowed by a second marriage. In his manhood the world ruler, who might have had anything, sought almost no diversion, and from his own austerity drew not even the privilege of asking the same of his court.

Yet even this absolute monarch, who combined in his hands more power than any other in a thousand years—even he was restricted by two checks such as one might wish for every dictator : two men who could tell him the truth—his confessor and his banker. He even permitted his former confessor to write him : " Sloth and calm have always contended within your royal person. I hope that God's mercy may grant you the boon of overcoming your two natural enemies in Germany : gluttony and waste of time."

Having read these sentences one morning, the Emperor on the next day

read the following lines, which the grandson of Fugger the weaver dared to write to him :

"It must be known and obvious to Your Majesty, as indeed I can prove by Your Majesty's own hand, that Your Majesty could not have attained the Roman crown without my aid. Herein I sought no advantage to myself. For had I ignored the House of Hapsburg and supported France, I might have gained much greater wealth and profit, which were, indeed, offered to me." Whereupon the Emperor wrote to an intimate : "It is as though the merchants were conspiring not to serve me. Neither in Augsburg nor anywhere else can I find anyone willing to lend me money, no matter what advantages I may offer." It will be seen that under *Führer* Charles, Germany was still governed by law ; the dictator did not dare to expropriate the bankers.

Titian, whom he had called to Augsburg, painted four magnificent portraits of him. The first one shows him bearded and prematurely aged ; another, standing beside his mastiff, with an icy expression of grandeur ; a later one, as a knight on a black stallion, in armour, helmet and lance. In the last one, the Munich portrait of 1548, he is sitting against the background of a stormy landscape, the black of his robes relieved only by the Golden Fleece no longer suspended from its chain. Here he has the wise and cautious expression of a seasoned schemer. His perpetual wars and his gout had quickly aged him. In his later years, by the way, he became his own general in the field, as well as his own chancellor.

To-day the ups and downs of the religious struggle and its reflection in the civil wars tire the reader ; interests and alignments shifted, but the motives remained the same. There was still talk about religion, but the sects had long become powerful factors moved by statesmen and generals like pawns on a chessboard.

What was Charles, what was the world, to think of these constant violent fluctuations in Germany, which lacked any central idea ? Were not the Turks standing menacingly in the Balkans ? Had they not on occasion advanced as far as Styria ? They threatened the Mediterranean—Selim and Suleiman had conquered Egypt and Rhodes, and their vassals went on marauding expeditions along the coasts, just like the ancient Normans. Charles had finally agreed to undertake something like a Crusade and had taken Tunis, but was reluctantly forced to turn back before Algiers.

At the same time serious uprisings began in the Netherlands. That country had barely tolerated Charles, who was a native, but was afraid of his son Philip, and rightly so. The Calvinist sect—the Reformation

for the rich, as it were—had meanwhile gained the upper hand in the country and was unwilling to tolerate either the Inquisition or the Spanish concept of honour. In his old age, Charles was faced with a serious conspiracy on the part of the princes—who feared that he might establish a hereditary monarchy, when actually they had long been living under such a rule. The Elector of Saxony, moreover, treacherously changed sides, deciding the struggle in favour of the Emperor's enemies. Charles, ill of the gout, would have been captured in Tyrol had not one regiment mutinied, opening the way for his escape.

After the last civil war and his flight the Emperor was a broken man. He had to sit by as a few of the Electors, the Margrave of Brandenburg in the van, bartered away the fortified cities of Metz, Toul and Verdun to Henry II of France, the enemy of the Reich. With his last strength Charles sought to regain Metz, but in the end was forced to retreat. The mighty victor was no longer strong enough to prepare a great vengeance. It was then that he resolved to abdicate. In the years of his happiness he had agreed with his wife that in their old age they would retire to a monastery and a convent. It was a strange pact between lovers, spouses, sovereigns—a pact explained only by their profound devoutness.

The religious Peace of Augsburg, which Charles signed in 1555 before his abdication, showed anew after thirty-four years of struggle how much stronger than the spirit the German State was. In accordance with the old Augsburg Confession, the Lutherans were tolerated, but not the Calvinists. Only governments, moreover, were free to choose their faith; individuals did so at the penalty of deportation. Princes of the Church lost their offices if they joined the Protestants. The result was an access of strength to the princes, who determined the faith of their subjects—*cuius regio eius religio*. Luther's religious fight had been but half won; the political struggle had been lost altogether. The people were not guaranteed freedom of conscience. Charles resigned and left Germany for ever; indeed, he did what no ruler had done since the days of Diocletian (around 300): he voluntarily renounced his power, not under pressure of revolution, but from wisdom and faith.

In three great acts of State, he laid down his crowns. In Brussels he turned over the destinies of the Order of the Golden Fleece to his son. Dressed in mourning, the man who stood before princes and notables, half emperor, half penitent sinner, publicly explained his renunciation:

“Forty years ago, in this hall, I was declared of age. I found Christendom torn asunder, hostile neighbours in turmoil. Nine times have I gone to Germany, six times to Spain, four times to France, twice to Africa,



twice to England. Now my last journey takes me to Spain. My strength is exhausted. Philip and Ferdinand, my son and my brother, will take over my realms. May my son hold fast to the faith of his fathers, to peace and justice. I have often erred, from youth, from wilfulness, from weakness. But never have I wronged anyone with malice aforethought. If I have done so, I ask your forgiveness to-day." He then proceeded to apologize to the high assemblage for his tears. Then he left for Spain, to enter a monastery.

But Charles was far too much the emperor to end his days in a cell. He had ordered a small palace built beside the monastery of St. Just and waited half a year until he could move into it. Charles seems to have looked forward to a long quiet eve of his life among books and flowers ; yet actually the ailing man had only a year and a half left. He summoned some fellow monks with pleasant voices to his side, and enjoyed listening to them. Europe drifted past him in his solitude. His physician was Dutch, his chamberlain Spanish, his page German, a mechanic was an Italian, and his Bible was French—for in the Spanish tongue it was forbidden, even to the King. Charles had grown up in the French language and now in his last months he returned to the forms of his first prayers, as had Luther in his final hours. He died gripping the little crucifix with which his wife had died.

Was there really a world between the two leaders of their time ? Were they not both more tolerant than their dogma, than the fanaticism of their followers would have them ? Had they not tolerated each other all their lives, for thirty years ? Luther saluted young Charles as a " noble scion of the House of Hapsburg " and later regarded him as the victim of his councillors. After the battle of Mühlberg, when Charles passed through Wittenberg and the Duke of Alba counselled him to disinter the body of Luther, who had but recently died, Charles replied : " I wage war against the living, not the dead." True, Charles was cold, while Luther was ardent. The one was a statesman, while the other was not. The one was always an emperor, while the other always remained a peasant.

Still, it was not so far from one to the other as it may seem to us to-day. It was by no mere formality that Charles listened to the monk, by no mere chance that he read the polemics and allowed his sister to become a Lutheran. Like the monk, Charles had hours of profound spiritual doubt, obscurities of the mind, handicaps of the body. Both succumbed to temptation, and if in the Emperor this was expressed in his alliance with the Protestant princes, it showed itself in the monk

in those moments when he gave a little ground to the emissaries of the Emperor. The devout Emperor drove out his Pope, as did Luther his own friends. The Emperor married off his children and relatives and the monk took as his wife the girl he had not really wanted. Both suffered from ailments—gout in the one case, diseased kidneys in the other—which made them at times want to give up the struggle in the world. Both fled into the monastery, the one when he was young, the other when he was old. Both lived too long and both voluntarily suffered a painful and almost bleak old age.

But Luther was a thoroughly German phenomenon, while Charles was not. Pride, tradition and dignity prevented the Emperor from taking the step that Napoleon in retrospect wished he might have taken—that of putting himself at the head of the Reformation and thus bringing all Germany under his rule. Erasmus called Lutheranism a tragedy, and Charles's strivings toward a united Europe might have been similarly characterized. In the tenth century such a dream was possible, but not in the sixteenth ; to-day in the twentieth, it is possible once more.

## 12

AT THIS point we must, on this single occasion, interrupt the form of narrative outlined in the Foreword, in order to recall briefly and in encyclopedic fashion to the reader's mind the situation in Europe around the year 1600. We shall endeavour to be quite short and objective.

It was Spain and France that were determining the course of history. Philip II, Charles's son, whose long reign ended in 1598, marked the one part of this epoch ; Henry IV of France, until 1610, the other. One source of the conflict between the two powers had been the conflict between the Hapsburgs and France—for under Charles V, Spain and the Hapsburg lands had still been united. The Hapsburgs with their loosely knit but far-flung lands encircled the French nation which was grouped much more closely. They prevented France from expanding eastward. Thus when Charles sought to unite and control Europe, all who resisted such action joined hands with his French opponent—German princes, the Sultan, at times even the Pope and Britain. In this struggle for Europe—one might even say, for world power—Charles in the end actually lost. Moreover, he left only Spain to his

son Philip, not Austria—thereby endangering Hapsburg predominance over France.

At first the wars continued to go in favour of Spain. But what did Philip do when he had vanquished his French rival and with him the Pope? He made his general, the Duke of Alba, bend a knee before the Papal enemy. Philip was the gloomy, pale, pious heir in whom all his father's strength and acumen had become diluted, even to his pale hair and eyes. Because he was a weakling, he became a fanatic. With that defeat he began the Counter-Reformation. His great father had died in a monastery, a cross in his hands, but he had often played the game of high politics between the Pope and the Lutheran princes. The pale Philip had his bed set up in his bedroom, as can still be seen to-day in the Escorial, in such a manner that he could see the high altar through his window.

His first victories made Spain the leading world power. Spain received hotly contested Italy and the Netherlands borders, and again took France into its embrace, even though kindred Austria had been isolated. Not until now did Spain become the one great active power of Christendom.

Germany had resigned its power in every respect; Britain had eliminated itself for a while; France had been weakened at home. All three were shaken by the struggle for the creed. For a while Spain remained leader of the Catholic world party. With a strength that was all the greater, the free spirits in Britain, France and the Netherlands rebelled against the strong and rigid advance of Spain in Europe, until France, divided in faith, was utterly laid low.

Now Spain's rivalry passed from France to Britain. With the rest of Europe seemingly dismembered, the two last great powers had to drift into a life-and-death struggle. In the long run only Britain or Spain could rule the sea. This struggle lasted for two hundred more years.

On the other side stood France, divided, defeated, its soil time and again a battleground—and yet with how much richer a future! A great process of centralization, and the monarchical ideal, almost uncontested for centuries, seemed to insure a power which the incessant divisions in Germany were never able to realize, and which in a people so active intellectually seemed superior even to Spain.

But again the struggle for the creed shook France, a struggle virtually unknown in Spain, where the people lacked all independence and thus never knew struggles or a Renaissance. No Rabelais could ever have

risen in Spain, to lay about him with spirit and irony. In France all this was wholesome anger tinged with raillery over abuses, rather than the dark, glowing, emotional struggle that pervaded the Germans. At this time too the lucid Latin spirit stood in contrast to the mystic urge of the Teutons. When the Reformation began to spill over the borders of Germany, it failed at first to find or create any profound popular agitation. At the outset the spirit of Calvin took a stronger hold upon society than on the people. In France the main struggle raged around the king's soul ; in Germany it raged around the soul of the people.

The Queen Mother of France, Catherine de' Medici, was not a Frenchwoman. Cunning rather than clever, a woman rather than a ruler, she was not even a great criminal, and when she allied herself with the leader of the Huguenots the way seemed to be paved for a reconciliation such as was never for a moment envisioned by Luther. The taciturn Coligny, who looked more like a poet than an admiral, was a man of great character and gravity ; but he hated the Spanish too bitterly to fight them only as Catholics. He sought victory for France, not for Calvin. The consequence was a religious civil war in France, similar to that during the German Reformation. The defeat of the Huguenots was half covered up by a negotiated peace, but soon it was called into question again by the revolt of the Netherlands.

At the time Spain was linked to the North and to world commerce through the Netherlands. But how could the active, intellectual Netherlanders, accustomed to freedom, agree with the stately, Byzantine, Spanish Court, that represented almost all of Spain ? The added factor of the schism in the faith provoked a civil war here too, and it was this soil particularly that became the scene of the Counter-Reformation.

It still remains a curious fact that Calvin emerged victorious in the Netherlands, of all places. He was fundamentally too spiritual to bear comparison with our own dictators, though he resembled them in his demands, his lack of humour, his delusions of grandeur. What a gloomy barracks he made of the gay city of Geneva, with dancing, dicing and singing forbidden on pain of the dungeon ! This reformer, who attacked the methods of Rome, himself used as his tools banishment, torture, beheading. The fact that he nevertheless achieved such great success among the Netherlanders, with their merry and broad-minded way of life, may perhaps be explained by the contrast to the Jesuits who were simultaneously competing for their favour and who met with a hostile reception, if only for the reason that they were a Spanish order. In somewhat similar fashion Britain fought Bolshevism twenty years

ago, because it came from Russia ; but in both instances the motives were complex.

Predominantly Teutonic, though brought into being on the frontier of three nations, the Netherlands had grown into a land of transition along the Scheldt, the Meuse and the Rhine. Flemish and French elements had more readily and deeply blended with the Germans than had been the case with the three races in Switzerland. That the Netherlands is the flattest and Switzerland the most mountainous land in Europe is a symbol of how different these two stocks are. Yet both hold as their core the only two German tribes that were imbued with a love of liberty. Like the Swiss four hundred years earlier, the Netherlands were in the long run unable to bear the pressure accepted by the other Germans without grumbling. They had barely been able to tolerate Charles, whose manner was more akin to their own ; but they were bound to rise against his son, the gloomy Philip. When Philip, after years of unrest, sent the Duke of Alba to the Netherlands, it was with the intention of annihilating such a people once and for all. These so-called heretics were subjugated by all the means of terror, literally by fire and sword.

The spirit of the great Charles hovered over this struggle, long after the Emperor had died—in the form of four of his children and grandchildren. King Philip II, the only legitimate child of the four, was weak and ill-tempered—so often qualities of the inherited order. One after the other, he married a Portuguese and an Englishwoman, both of whom soon died, then a French royal princess and finally an Austrian niece. But despite his practical application of the Hapsburg marriage formula and his dabbling with the Spanish formula of murder, all that this man of the sallow, treacherous face succeeded in accomplishing was to have the world empire fall apart upon his death.

By contrast, the figure of Margaret of Parma stands out in radiant beauty. The child of the twenty-two-year-old Charles by a lovely Dutchwoman, she had been entrusted by his last will with the administration of the Netherlands for the first eight years after his death. Her son by the Duke of Parma was another glamorous figure. This grandson of Charles, Alessandro Farnese, became one of the great generals of his time. Between them bustled the brilliant Don John of Austria, child of Charles's union with the most beautiful of all his loves, Barbara Blomberg of Augsburg, and begotten about the time that Charles's natural daughter gave birth to Alessandro Farnese. Between these three highborn illegitimates the jealousy of Philip, their highly legitimate brother and

uncle, rose and fell, carefully and treacherously concealed. Philip was mortally afraid of his father's genius which reappeared in them—though he was not above utilizing it. When he found Margaret too indulgent toward the Dutch, and dangerous in other ways, he recalled her, sending the sinister Duke of Alba in her place. It was against the despotism of this Duke of Alba that the Prince of Orange rose. In heroic struggle the Dutch defeated the Duke, forcing him to yield the liberties for which they had fought for three hundred years. It was then that the city of Leiden, which had particularly distinguished itself, when questioned by the new monarch, the Prince of Orange, whether it preferred tax exemption or a university in reward, chose the latter, thus setting an example for all time. How much wiser it is in the end for city and State to adhere to the spirit !

Thus the spirit of the three illegitimate children endeavoured to manifest the heritage of the blood, while the legitimate son in the end ruined his lawful heritage. We recognize anew that genius is best handed down in unions of love, not in wedlock.

The long war that took place on French soil around 1570—partly a war of religion, partly one of power, with success for years shifting between Spain, Britain and France—this war included the famous murder of Coligny, committed at the behest of Queen Catherine de' Medici, whose outstanding minister Coligny was. The massacre of St. Bartholomew which took place about the same time (1572) exacted a toll of thousands in Paris but failed to break the spirit of the Huguenots. It represented the climax of the Catholic Counter-Reformation.

Our own dictators are intent upon increasing their populations while at the same time complaining about lack of space ; but the relative unimportance of such figures is shown by population estimates around the year 1580. Spain had seven, France seventeen, million inhabitants yet France was defeated by Spain. The Netherlands and Britain each had from three to four millions, yet they were able to create the greatest difficulties for Spain, which wasso much stronger, and for France, which had five times as many people. Britain was great and Germany small in the sixteenth century, but the two countries had their princes to thank for that.

Elizabeth, who reigned almost simultaneously with Philip II, down to the turn of the century, had to put up with the Reformation, which her father Henry VIII had joined for the sake of her mother. It remains to her credit that she refused the most powerful king of her time as a suitor,

only to make that same Philip dependent upon herself and defeat him in the end. Though her people hated Philip, she shrewdly made common cause with him against the enemy, France, while still working with the representatives of the people, Parliament.

When the decisive battle came, the two rulers, Philip and Elizabeth, had grown old. When the famous Spanish Armada, in the early August of 1588, collapsed before the younger, fresher English fleet, even contemporaries grasped the true significance of the event—the great issue between two ways of life, two races: the Teutonic and the Latin character, the old Church and the new faith, absolutism and the beginnings of democracy.

At about the same time the United Netherlands were held together as a Calvinist realm only in the so-called Seven Provinces, though in reality they had grown to the proportions of a major, and even a world power, equal to Britain in commerce and shipping.

Between these two Protestant-liberal Teutonic sea powers, a Catholic, continental, Latin, and even absolutist power grew to strength—not as an enemy but as an ally—the prototype of all the European States of the future: national France, under Henry IV, who recast the almost disintegrated nation. In 1598 at Nantes, he concluded a reasonable peace with the Huguenots, setting an example of tolerance, now rediscovered by the French people and used two hundred years later as a basis for the three slogans of the great Revolution.

## 13

TWENTY YEARS after Philip's death, a war broke out in Germany which no one dreamed would last thirty years (1618-1648). Twice before it had been barely averted, as though its devastation, if not its length, had been foreseen. It was altogether a political war, conducted to protect vested interests, a civil war that expanded into a world war. It was a war involving economics and dynasties—anything but religion. The powers, still calling themselves the Catholic League and the Protestant Union, as in the sixteenth century, no longer represented convictions; in neither camp were there heroes or martyrs of the faith. Avarice and ambition alone determined the camps which the princes chose, and the two or three great generals produced by the war were *condottieri* who

changed flags for money and honours. These struggles for power that shook Europe then as now had nothing to do with spirit and faith. So little do their course and issue have to say about the ideas which a century before had brought the contending parties into being that this most famous of all German wars offers posterity far less of interest than the Reformation. Events no more than individuals can claim importance merely because they spring from an important source.

By refraining from enumerating all the margraves and dukes who then made history, we direct our view toward the people—the Czechs first of all, whose love of freedom again gave the signal for rebellion, as it had done two hundred years before through Huss. This time there was no united nation at the outset, as in the Netherlands, but merely one section of the nobility in Bohemia rising against the other, until other principalities of Austria took the side of these Protestants against their Catholic emperor. For the emperors, who still called themselves “Roman Emperors of the German Nation,” like their predecessors for five centuries, though they no longer made pilgrimages to Rome—these German emperors had become Austrian emperors since the imperial office had become hereditary in the House of Hapsburg. The Spanish line was now entirely separate—Philip had ruled in Spain, Ferdinand in Austria; and despite the fine long title it may be said that from 1560 to 1803 the emperors ruled over only a small part of Germany. As early as the seventeenth century, the contrast between Austria and Prussia had begun to develop—an antithesis that was to lead to great wars in the eighteenth and to a decision in favour of Prussia in the nineteenth century. Yet the more the Hapsburgs lost in the German realm, the more they gained elsewhere, until in the end they ruled over a great Danubian empire in which eight languages were spoken.

The rebellion, and with it the protracted war, began when the Bohemians threw two imperial officials out of a window in the castle at Prague—an isolated assault, like the murder of the archduke in June 1914, that finally unloosed the world war so long prepared but postponed time and again.

In the first battle, at the White Mountain (1620), a Count Palatine, whom the Bohemians had made their King, was defeated and had to flee before the partisans of the Emperor. This decisive battle lasted only one hour, like that by which Bolivar won Peru. The victorious Emperor Ferdinand yielded to sadism, venting his rage in executions and sparing only the condemned aristocrats the punishment of drawing and quartering—they were merely shot. But unlike the situation in the Netherlands,



this rebellion did not simply originate among the aristocracy, it also ended there.

It was in fact merely the quarrel over the booty that expanded this purely local war with its decisive one-hour battle into a Thirty Years' War. The major powers now wanted to despoil Germany; England and France, above all, held the moment to be opportune for launching an attack upon the Hapsburgs in their dual monarchy, with the Netherlands playing the part of an incentive as well as of a prize. The Danish King, supplied with money by England and at least tolerated by the Protestant princes, gained a foothold along the Elbe and Weser; Sweden had even more reason to use its faith as a pretext for intervention. Thus the great powers invaded Germany as regents for the smaller ones. Since there was no one to defend the Reich as a whole, France was able to entertain hopes of partitioning Germany and inheriting the western regions.

These were the motives of world history that actually dominated the great war. Germany did not become the plaything of alien kings and armies because it had two creeds, but because the lack of national sentiment drove one German prince against the other, as had always been the case. It was not religious conviction that then rent Germany asunder, but the princes, who begrudged each other a few parcels of land and preferred to see the disputed provinces under foreign rule rather than to have them in the control of their cousins. At no time and place during this war in Germany did any true popular struggle develop as had previously been the case in the Netherlands. The faithful German subject, who had obediently practised the religion of his sovereign since the religious peace, now followed him into war, or at least offered no opposition to the war's being conducted by paid mercenaries. Richelieu, the dictator of France, took advantage of the interests of the German princes, and these in turn took advantage of foreign powers to advance their cause at home. The ancient jealousy of German dynasties and the old obedience of German subjects collaborated in ruining the Reich.

In the field of battle a curious character now emerged—Albrecht von Wallenstein (1583–1634). Half German, half Slav, of obscure antecedents, he seems to have been the son of a Bohemian woman and the descendant of Bohemian officers. In religion as in race he represented a blend, for he was brought up a Protestant but had been entrusted to the care of the Jesuits after the death of his parents. Actually without any faith whatever, he believed in the influence of the stars—far more strongly and profoundly

than was the fashion. The mixture of energy and imagination manifested in this astrologer-general shows him to be German—his character shows it as well. In him the German struggle between State and spirit was personified in sinister fashion.

Wallenstein, who relied entirely on his own gifts and on his sword, may perhaps be called the second uncrowned dictator. His horoscope, cast at the time by Kepler, might be applied to a German dictator to-day. It reads : "Merciless, without brotherly or conjugal love, devoted only to himself, hard toward his inferiors, miserly, deceptive, uneven in conduct." The last words alone—"for the most part silent"—do not fit his present-day successor.

In addition to the money gained by two wealthy marriages, Wallenstein managed to enrich himself to such an extent in the expropriations that followed the Battle of the White Mountain that at forty he was the richest landowner in Bohemia and in consequence was elevated to the rank of Prince of Friedland. By virtue of his wealth rather than by any glory—which he did not yet possess—he was able to build up and pay for an army of his own, confronting the Emperor as a power with his money and soldiers, both of which the Emperor lacked. Thus he commanded fear and respect even before he had won any battles. His mystic strain impressed the Germans, and though his mysticism was apparently genuine he also utilized the power of its suggestion. Even the first German dictator knew how to blend mysticism with propaganda. Springing from the lower gentry, he was not handicapped by the family quarrels of princes ; and thus his eye was fixed not on border strips and cities, but on whole empires. On occasion he even thought of becoming emperor himself. He carefully observed the example of Richelieu, who was creating a world monarchy transcending classes ; the Jesuits had taught him that a great goal should be striven for with all available means ; and he defiantly thought that a strong army would be able to attain that goal for himself or his emperor.

As a true dictator he preferred to take advantage of the weaknesses of his time rather than to heal them, mocking the prejudices of other generals who clung to tradition. His abysmal cynicism fathered the thought that war must feed war ; and when the sceptical Emperor asked him whether 20,000 men could live on the land of Bohemia, he gave the classic answer : "Not 20,000, but 50,000." After victorious campaigns in northern Germany, he got the Emperor to make him Duke of Mecklenburg, and carried the war to the Baltic Sea. The legitimate princes resented this upstart in the rôle of a German duke, and threatened the

Emperor. Unless he dismissed Wallenstein, they said, they would unite with France. The Emperor was in debt to this curious millionaire-general for the pay of the army. As debtors so often do, he cast about for some pretext to get rid of the unwelcome creditor. It was at this moment that the King of Sweden landed his army in Germany.

Gustavus Adolphus (1594-1632) has become one of the falsifications of German legend and history, like Arminius, Barbarossa and Hindenburg, believed in by the Germans because the destined heroes are blond of beard, blue of eye, or huge of stature. When Gustavus Adolphus intervened in the German confusion, he was compared to the biblical "Lion of Midnight," passing through his enemies unharmed, laying low tens of thousands to his right and left. The only thing the people did not clearly grasp was whom he proposed to kill. The manner in which he suddenly landed in Pomerania, a victorious young prince and saviour, had the same effect on his contemporaries as the landing three hundred years later of President Wilson. But when he advanced in Germany, it was the Protestant princes who took alarm.

Seeing his coastline menaced, he could choose no wiser course than intervention. But since at that time Sweden had enemies among the princes of three denominations, it was quite clear that this Saint Michael with the Protestant sword counted among his great protectors Cardinal Richelieu, the Pope and the Sultan. The Swedish King was acting purely for the safety of his country, and in no sense for the victory of the Reformation. Wallenstein, whom the Emperor dismissed immediately after his important antagonist appeared on the German scene, retired grudgingly. Only after Gustavus Adolphus had attained victory did his Protestant cousins decide to join him. Then, when northern Germany victoriously marched against southern Germany, the Emperor recalled Wallenstein.

From his knowledge of the stars, Wallenstein, the Swede's senior by one decade, had foreseen the approaching end of both their lives. True, he was tempted to defeat the young hero, for his was a character that always had one ear cocked toward destiny, while his eyes were fixed upon glory and posterity. All the world hung on Wallenstein's decision, for the Swedish troops about whose God-fearing conduct so much had been heard had engaged in worse devastation along the Rhine and in Bavaria than had the imperial mercenaries. For two months, the armies lay opposite each other near Nuremberg—undecided, like two great players before the decisive move.

Then the Swede attacked victoriously at Lützen, but fell in the battle

(1632). On that day his fame was determined and his legend began, for who could fail to regard a handsome, fair-haired king as a knight of the Holy Grail, especially when he fell while achieving victory ! His death in battle, moreover, set a fine example to the German princes, none of whom had fought, sword in hand, for honour and people. Not a single German Emperor, and barely one German prince, made the supreme sacrifice in such heroic fashion, though violent death did end the lives of several other kings in Europe. Two English kings fell in battle, while four were assassinated or executed. In France six suffered a similar fate. The fact that no reigning German sovereign in a thousand battle-scarred years fell in the face of the enemy, that only revolutionaries and heretics were killed but never ruling princes—this fact permits of significant conclusions as to the character of those to whom German allegiance was entrusted.

When the victorious Swede had fallen, the defeated Wallenstein became the fortunate heir of the battle. Now that his rival was eliminated, he might ally himself with the Swedes against the Emperor. Sulking, he lurked in his Bohemian winter quarters, bargaining with three Protestant powers at the same time, apparently aiming at the kingship of Bohemia. But at the age of fifty he had exhausted his substance. He no longer mounted a horse and his gout points to an opulent life into which he had probably been led by the wealth he acquired by marriage. The Emperor still had reason to fear him and so resorted to the method always left to the weak, though it never solves a crisis : he had Wallenstein murdered.

## 14

AT THIS high point in the tragedy, with both the protagonists removed from the scene by violence, the plot begins to disintegrate ; the second half of the long war shows both the German parties in full decline. Since neither of them was able to achieve victory, France was the victor.

Richelieu was a realist. At the very moment that he was crushing the Calvinists within his State, he began to give important aid to the German Protestants by means of money and promises. He called this "the German Liberty," and in its name he supported the claims and

privileges of the German classes against the German Emperor. The money and influence, and soon the soldiers, of Catholic France were now fighting against the Catholic Emperor, while the Protestant principalities—Saxony, Brandenburg, Denmark—were fighting Protestant Sweden. This was the so-called “War of Religion.” It all took place on German soil, for a decade and more. Nor was this change in Germany due to the lack of national sentiment among the princes alone; it extended to the German soldiers too.

The decline of German courage was even then the subject of discussion, as the decline of French courage is to-day. For the military valour of a nation is subject to fluctuations; and the French once before disappointed the world, when a mere half-century was sufficient to reduce the famous army of Napoleon to a battered remnant under his nephew. Even in the “Swabian War” the Germans had been unable to stand up against the small army of the Swiss. Wallenstein conducted courts-martial for cowardice. The German soldier had a reputation for braggadocio, profanity and fine feathers—but military glory passed over to France.

The long war had thrown back Germany two hundred years. Not until around 1800 was the country able to regain the level of prosperity it had enjoyed in 1600. When, in 1648, after years of preparation, the Peace of Westphalia was finally signed, the questions of religion remained unresolved.

Even politically the great war in the Reich had been a failure. Everywhere the Estates were weakened, while the princes were strengthened and liberties restricted. The strength of neither Emperor nor Reichstag was increased; every prince and every principality in the Reich could proceed at will. The only innovation was that the privileges of the princes had now become law. German professors assumed that servile attitude toward the princes which later aroused the contempt of the world. True, the German has a passion for obedience, but, in the words of Goethe, he endeavours to account for everything. For this reason, whenever the State demands anything, he looks for a man to reassure him that all is in good order—and such a man must always be an expert. Unless the German knows that five per cent. of philosophy is alloyed into the steel of his cannon, his conscience is troubled, he will take worse aim and score fewer hits than if a professor had dogmatically proved to him the justice of his cause beforehand. At the same time it was Pufendorf, the expert on constitutional law, who upon request soon proved how and why the power of the princes was superior to that of the

Emperor. We see anew the spirit of Luther hovering over German civic virtue.

All the consequences of the Thirty Years' War—in the religious as well as the political field—were negative, and only the impoverishment and reduction in the size of the Reich in favour of foreign powers represented positive facts. In this peace the Reich for the first time renounced whole pieces of territory. The Swiss and the Dutch—the only ones who had grown rich and strong—received confirmation of their independence and non-German status. The French took Alsace and kept permanent occupation forces on the right bank of the Rhine ; but at the same time their spirit, their influence, their language now pervaded Germany. The German courts all conformed to the French taste, and soon every princeling wanted to be a little *Roi Soleil*. This all began around 1650, and in the ensuing hundred years it exerted a profound influence on German culture and politics—an influence both good and bad. Indeed, this was perhaps the most significant consequence of this great war.

The treaty, however, also pushed back the Germans from the sea. The mouths of all the rivers were taken away from them ; large coastal regions fell to Sweden and Denmark ; but three German cities were left along the Baltic ; landlocked Germany could communicate with the outside world only under supervision of non-Germans—nor did it have any share in the newly discovered colonies. At the end of thirty years its realm of thirteen million inhabitants had shrunk to four. Twelve thousand places had been destroyed—in certain provinces not a single village was left. In Worms in 1635 corpses were dug up and devoured. At other places, the chronicles report, hanged men were eaten and little children slaughtered.

In Nuremberg, provincial authorities in 1632 permitted Catholic priests to marry, while it was recommended that laymen take two wives to increase the population. After its occupation by Tilly the Palatinate had but two per cent. of its original population. The Hanseatic League collapsed and the trading cities in southern Germany lost their contact with Italy. For an entire century commerce on the Rhine was dead and the population lived by denuding the Black Forest and floating the lumber down to the Netherlands. The impoverished merchants now took from the soldiers the diamonds and gold they had looted, and the trade in illicit wares utterly ruined business morality.

At this point historians are fond of picturing, in a vivid chapter, the scene in Germany, devastated and depopulated in consequence of the

Thirty Years' War. To-day any description of the consequences of war must necessarily fall behind our newspaper reading, and thus we merely point to the aspect of Poland in the year 1940.

As always in times of governmental impotence, so at this time the German spirit rose. Whoever has ridden through the parched East African veldt will remember the delight and amazement aroused by the sudden sight of a few red blossoms unfolding in solitary splendour on the foliage of an acacia, as if fed from hidden springs. Thus too in this wilderness of needless slaughter two wondrous flowers burst into bloom. Both of these men of genius were persecuted émigrés whose fame has outlasted everything ever accomplished by their powerful persecutors. Both were revolutionaries and humanists. What they created rose from their heads and hearts without conflict and thus remained immortal.

Comenius (1592-1671), Germany's greatest pedagogue, was really a Czech, though his work made him a German, as it had Erasmus. Being a Protestant, he was forced to flee from southern Germany to Poland. Later he was called to London, but while there was overtaken by Cromwell's revolution, making his escape to Sweden with the help of a Dutch merchant. Fate took him to Transylvania, and later he could again return to Poland, but when the town where he lived was burned down, losing him all his property, he was forced to flee to the Netherlands. He was then in his mid-sixties. Through six countries this magnificent émigré carried his spirit, his "pansophy," as he called it—an encyclopedia of knowledge whose principles were to be derived from nature and literature. Laying the groundwork for language study and the apperceptive method of instruction, amid the thunder of the great war, he liberated the youth of Europe from cold formalism and became the benefactor of millions who do not even know his name.

The other lofty spirit from this epoch was all-German and never entirely gave way to persecution.

Johann Kepler (1571-1630) lived during the war, a visionary and mathematician; but far from being immured in his quiet study, he was in constant personal danger of persecution. Prematurely born and of weak health, he was harried by quarrelsome parents, buffeted into being a waiter by his father, a Swabian inn-keeper. In the end a scholarship enabled him to attend the university, and between times he was able to eke out his living as a sexton. As a maker of calendars whose predictions proved correct, he managed to get an appointment to the municipal school in Graz, as "Instructor in Mathematics and Morals."

Driven out as a zealous Protestant, he was invited to Prague by Tycho Brahe, the greatest astronomer of his time, who called on Kepler for help with his new tables. When Tycho died shortly afterward, he left Kepler all his precious papers, the observations of twenty years.

Once persecuted by the Catholics as a Protestant, Kepler later drew the fire of the Protestants, like Copernicus a century before, because his astronomical findings led to conclusions that ran counter to the Bible. Yet when all the Protestant officials were driven out of Austria, Kepler was exempted—not because of his research, but because the Emperor Rudolph, of unsettled mind, sought to keep him at his side as his astrologer. But though other princes consulted him too, he never attained wealth or tranquillity, and in the face of further persecutions had to flee to Bavaria. Light is thrown on the way in which he made his way by his resigned statement about astrology. He called it the loose daughter of Astronomy who yet had to support her wise old mother. Always in financial straits because his salary was not paid, he nevertheless declined calls to England and Italy with the words: "So long as Germany does not cast me out, I shall remain true to her. I am a German, grown up among Germans, and I seek to live only in the realm of German custom, in the air of German spiritual freedom." These noble words, unique in the history of the German spirit, seem to atone for hundreds of Germans whom the lack of spiritual freedom embittered and exiled.

During his migratory life Kepler discovered the three laws named after him, upon which Newton later built. These discoveries added a scientific basis to those of Copernicus, adding physical astronomy to the mathematical astronomy of Tycho Brahe. Kepler's telescope was about as strong as a present-day opera glass. Taking into account the weak instruments at his command, we rightly admire his achievements, and agree with Leibnitz who called him "the Incomparable."

But what distinguishes Kepler from other princes of astronomy and shows him to be a German is that he was a poet and a mystic, not in contrast to but precisely in his rôle as scholar. More ardent than Galileo, he was deeply immersed in the music of the spheres; visions led him to his cosmic concepts. Combining mathematics and imagination after the German fashion, he seemed in the midst of the religious struggles to find, indeed, to represent, a symbolic substitute. In contrast to the canon Copernicus, the layman Kepler was devout. He had thought of proving in a special chapter that his predecessor was in complete agree-



ment with the Bible, but he left it out when his major work was printed, lest he create still more of an uproar.

In all that signified emotion, Kepler transcended Copernicus. Kepler quoted Plato's words—that God did not merely manifest himself in geometry : that He *was* geometry. He pointed to God's manifestation in nature, calling the stars animate beings, speaking of a harmonious universe built up of geometrical forms, and proceeded to the audible stage of basic things—in music. He challenged the musicians to follow him, since they were best able to grasp the harmonious universe, and he began his mathematical chapter on the motions of the stars with these words : *Nunc opus Uraniae sonitu maiore !* (“Now, Urania, we shall need richer tones !”)

Thus searching and ranging from stars to music, a calculator who saw laws in his visions, Kepler represents the picture of the German at his best, never surpassed in his field of action.

In November 1630, when the princes at the Ratisbon Reichstag were quarrelling over their properties, no one knew that but a few steps away in a modest house one of the greatest Germans was closing eyes that had penetrated deep into the firmament. Kepler left behind twenty-two florins and a nag worth eleven florins.

# *Schism of State and Spirit*

From the Great Elector to Goethe  
(1650-1800)

*"Germany? Where does it lie? How can we find the Whole?  
Learned Germany's one, but the State has a different soul."*

—GOETHE

## 1

ITS SANDY soil carefully divided into a thousand fields planted with rye and potatoes, its flatness broken but rarely by rolling hills, the Brandenburg Mark stretches into the infinite distance, like a drowsy sea at noon. Strips of tall pine woods range through it, and there are firs too, but very few beeches and other leafy trees. The flat, dry, inhospitable trunks of the pines rise from soil poor in brushwood, and when sitting down beneath them one rests for the most part on a carpet of old brown pine needles. Grouse and partridge live in the crannies of field and bush. In the towns streets and canals indicate a careful observance of order—everything is marked off and divided. In the villages the flocks of neat and even houses, generally of red brick, are strictly tended by a bare, pointed church spire. The town halls look like barracks. Warning notices are posted on them, summarizing everything that is *verboten* here. During long drives one may on occasion stop to admire a fine old gabled house or a cosy inn lying like a foundling in this well-organized plain. A sedulously animate uniformity, a mechanized tedium, extends over everything.

All the roads, railways and canals lead to the giant metropolis in the centre. Built up on wasteland, along the banks of a small river which has virtually no effect on the city's aspect, Berlin has grown up haphazardly and without plan, like an ant-hill, following the changing exigencies of

the decades ; and, after a brief period of good taste, it has grown more and more ugly during its expansion in the past fifty years. The structures that appeal to the eye have for the most part to do with war—palace, arsenal, palace guard-house, arch of triumph, two fine old monuments to princes. In Bismarck's time there was much in the older sections of the city that was original, if not beautiful, but all that has been destroyed to-day. In recent years even the historic street in the middle of the town has been denuded of its crowning glory, the linden trees, to afford swifter transit in case of revolt.

The city lacks all the features that adorn the ancient capitals of Europe ; it lacks also the green squares of London, the magnificent open spaces of Paris, the hillside vistas of Rome. The only lung through which its millions are to breathe, the Tiergarten, is spoilt by its geometrically straight paths ; and where there is green, fences usually restrict movement. If the visitor does have the good fortune to find a well-placed bench, more likely than not a statue in white marble frowns down on him menacingly—a king, his left foot thrust forward, his hand on his sword-hilt.

Berlin, the fastest and hardest-working city in Europe—two qualities in which it resembles New York—is also the least appealing, for all movement is organized and in its realms everything that is not expressly permitted is prohibited. The clock rules four million people, and a glance at the left wrist is a typical gesture throughout the day, among all classes, at any hour—for even amusement is organized along definite lines. Not only to-day, but for centuries, Berlin has exceeded other capitals in the strength of its police, its garrison and the officialdom concerned with restricting liberty by enforcing rigid ordinances and injunctions.

A startling industriousness embraces every citizen, male or female, leaving no scope for anyone to live after his own fashion outside his own four walls. Sometimes we feel touched by the awkward way in which pleasure is organized. The humour native to the city is earthy and real. The good-natured but grouching Berliner has many good stories to his credit. Over a glass of beer, he may be *gemütlich* for as long as an hour. The best Prussian slogans come, not from the mouths of kings or poets, but from the little man of Berlin. The only thing he is always shying away from is the barrier with which the police power hedges him in, the system that inescapably regulates all public life. No one can get away from it—not even the rich man, for life in this city is regimented and the only way to breathe free air is to get away. For two hundred years the

life of Prussia has been thus regulated, regardless of whether there was a king at the head, a Kaiser, or a Führer.

Like the three pyramids near Cairo looming suddenly and unexpectedly from the desert, the pyramid of the Prussian State rises in the middle of Brandenburg's sandy plains—a cunningly wrought, unimaginative monster. But no Rameses or Cheops lies buried here ; only Liberty.

Broadly sprawled on the slopes of a lovely countryside, surrounded by melodious hills, in one of the most fertile regions of Europe, between vineyards, flower gardens and tenderly scattered villages, built and planned along grandiose lines, drawing wider and wider circles from its central cathedral square, lies Vienna, the metropolis, which Goethe called the capital of the German Reich. Rising not on the Danube itself but close to its royal course, Vienna's splendour of domes and towers represents a wealth of noble structures such as elsewhere only Paris and Rome can offer. Built on a site recommended by nature and history, at the threshold of two civilizations, gently lifted from one epoch into another by careful hands, tastefully modernized—not much older than Berlin, by the way, as a prince's residence—Vienna has enjoyed an organic growth in which beauty and liberty determined life, in which the State demanded a minimum, rather than a maximum, to keep order.

In this city, ruled by leisure and mood rather than by speed and precision, it is not the clock but the café that has for centuries determined the life of all classes. Instead of long and concentrated work, casual and brief occupation was the ideal, leaving time for real living. In such an atmosphere waltz-time flourished rather than military marches, good taste in place of punctuality, while obedience was supplanted by its very opposite—music. To this day these two most important German cities are like two women : the one efficient, clear-headed, methodically filling her day with as many practical activities as possible, conscientiously carrying out household and social obligations, but still pursuing sports and attending the concerts at night ; the other a charming lady spending half her time on herself, her dress and her admirers, who makes up for an occasional lack in family care by her warmth and grace, by high spirits and good humour, and who in the end enjoys and confers greater happiness than her counterpart, the model of efficiency.

From which of these two cities and backgrounds, these two conceptions of a metropolis, might spirit and music, personality and gaiety, good taste and the art of living have been expected to rise ?

True, even in Prussia, symbol of organized work, the spirit occasionally reared its head—in the form of useful knowledge, such as was demanded by the nature of this soil : physicians, inventors, merchants arose here, and once or twice even a statesman. But the plains of Prussia and the restlessness of Berlin hardly ever created or even tolerated a poet, composer or philosopher of truly great stature. The spirit always had to be imported when it came into this Prussian centre with its military tradition ; and once it had grown rich and powerful, this city was able to borrow or purchase anything. Similarly, the anarchical and decidedly nonconformist citizens of Vienna knew their duty in times of emergency, and defended all Europe against the Turks when these were shooting into the city from the hills, as the new barbarians to-day shoot from the air into London. It was the Humboldts who represented the spirit in Berlin, as Prince Eugene in Vienna represented military science. True, they all had French blood in their ancestry.

But since statesmanship belongs to the arts, better statesmanship issued from Austria than from Prussia. In this important field where spirit and State meet, Vienna always retained superiority. Thus the great successes of military Prussia were won on the battlefields, those of Austria, country of culture, in its offices. The one was better at fighting, the other at bargaining: People always fear the superior strength of a neighbour—while they admire his superior intellect, even when they know that it is harmful to them. Thus, the world's sympathy went out to the shrewd statesmanship of Austria, while it turned away from the strong government of Prussia. People felt that the leadership of the one country grew out of an ancient culture of the mind, that of the other from an ancient culture of arms.

For a State like Prussia, which in three hundred years of existence as a military power has been defeated but twice, could, like Sparta, attain its remarkable growth from margraviate to empire only by the iron discipline of war used as a craft. Vienna, on the other hand, like Athens, had to pay for its beauty and spirit with repeated defeats and ultimate surrender. Athens produced dramas and statues, temples and philosophies, whose forms even to-day set the standard for our eyes and thoughts. But Sparta—victorious Sparta—would be all but forgotten were it not for an occasional imitator proudly calling himself and his subjects Spartan and actually for a wretched moment winning victories by discipline and obedience, as Berlin and its Führer are again doing to-day.

This rivalry between Prussia and Austria was the essential element in

shaping German history from 1670-1870, and was bound to lead to the greatest rupture which the German State ever suffered. In Prussia during this period the State approached closer and closer toward absolute supremacy, while in Austria the supremacy of the spirit became equally decisive. In its growing submission to the power of arms, Prussia, oriented entirely toward the soldier, could gain in power only at the expense of the spirit. With increasing success, the arrogance of the military cliques grew apace, as did that of the leaders, the Junkers. What had been necessity now became a cult; war grew from a means into an end, and since it was war that preoccupied and enriched the ruling classes, a distrust of the mind arose which to-day has deepened into contempt. Unimaginative, cold and efficient, like beaters on the Brandenburg plains, it was Prussia that organized the round-up of all game in Germany.

At the same time the most precious elements of the German rather than the Prussian spirit were collected and cultivated in Vienna and Austria. German genius fled Prussia, settling in Saxony and Austria, in Bavaria, Swabia, and along the Rhine—everywhere except within the borders of old Prussia.

In the very century from 1670 to 1770, while the Margraves of Brandenburg were developing the world power of the Prussian kings, Germany gave birth to that glorious band of men who were to establish the fame of the German people forever. None of them was a Prussian—not during this greatest century, nor before, nor afterwards. Who are they—these names that represent Germany in the world?

There is Gutenberg from Mayence, Kepler from Swabia, Dürer, Cranach and Holbein from Bavaria and Franconia, Grünwald from Swabia, Erasmus from the Netherlands, Luther from Saxony. Then, in the innermost sanctum of the temple: Goethe and Schiller, Lessing and Hölderlin; Bach, Gluck and Haydn; Mozart and Schubert. Let us leave the sanctum and look upon others: Weber, Schumann and Wagner, Johann Strauss, Brahms and Bruckner, Feuerbach and Schwind, Jean Paul and Novalis, Grillparzer and Anzengruber, Leibnitz and Schopenhauer, Hegel and Schelling, Fichte and Arndt, the brothers Schlegel and the brothers Grimm; Schliemann, Mommsen, Liebig and Bunsen, down to the lesser spirits of our own days, like Zeppelin or Richard Strauss—South Germans all of them, Saxons, Austrian or Hansards. Handel is the great exception but only a formal one, because Halle, where he was born in 1680, a Saxon town, came a short time before to Prussia and was situated on the border of Saxony.

To them must be added Beethoven, half a Fleming ; Kant, half Scot, half " Franke " ; the Humboldts, descended from Huguenots ; Nietzsche, who called himself a Pole. And finally Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer, Offenbach, Heine, Marx—pure-blooded Jews to whose fame Germany no longer may lay claim. Next come the Prussians who fled : Klopstock, who escaped to Denmark ; Herder, who escaped to Riga ; Winckelmann, who escaped to Rome—all of them with words of hate against the homeland on their lips.

What is left to Prussia is Heinrich von Kleist, the national poet of Prussia, who wrote to his bride that the country must have been laid bare by the retreating sea through an error of nature, since it was made for whales rather than for men.

But even of the generals hardly a single one was born in the soldier State of Prussia : Prince Eugene was a Frenchman, Tilly a Dutchman, Wallenstein half a Czech. Likewise the famous Prussian statesmen Stein and Hardenberg, the generals Scharnhorst, Dessau and Gneisenau, Blücher and Moltke—none of them born in Prussia. The only ones in this survey who were Prussians by birth, yet did not escape, were a few eminent scholars like Helmholtz, Koch, Virchow. Of names that truly conquered the world there remain but two : Frederic the Great and Bismarck.

## 2

THE HOHENZOLLERNS were a clan of German counts of no particular distinction, who in the eleventh century had their abode in the southernmost corner of the Reich between the Upper Neckar river and Lake Constance. In the twelfth century their friendship with an emperor made them burgraves of Nuremberg, while in the fifteenth another emperor gave them Brandenburg as a fief. There they attained the status of Electors. Then by various marriages they managed to acquire remote bits of Germany in the East and West. For exactly five centuries they expanded in the north of Germany, rarely losing territory and that only for brief periods, until at last they evolved a State that was pieced together by inheritance, marriage and perfidy and that was never able to develop a national feeling ; its subjects always called themselves Silesians, Rhinelanders, Hanoverians—never Prussians.

These various individual pieces of land had previously given allegiance

to other dynasties, and their centrifugal forces were so strong that they could be kept together only by the exercise of strict authority—that is to say, by officers and officials. Three hundred years of practice developed the soldierly virtue of obedience among these groups, but by no means among them alone. In place of love of country, a caste spirit grew up, and interest in public affairs was exhausted in the desire to belong to the upper crust. Military regimentation was the very essence of the whole structure and thus the only kind of State that could have developed was a military and police State.

The casual nature of Prussia's origin, its lack of organic development, are to some extent determined by the Hohenzollerns' character. Of the twenty rulers over Brandenburg and Prussia, from the first Elector to the last Emperor, one was almost invariably thrifty and hard-working while his successor would be weak, pompous and dissolute; so that the son would once more have to acquire the substance his father had squandered, until the grandson could take advantage of the improved situation to enjoy himself as his grandfather had done. One thing they all had in common—a contempt for treaties that soon made the whole family notorious. Most of these rulers reigned for long periods—twenty-five years on the average, with the best of them reaching almost half a century—so that the ebb and flow of their fortunes extended over long cycles.

As princes, they were more dependent on the attitude of the Brandenburg and Prussian Junkers than were the other German princes on their nobles. Open struggle alternated with concealed tests of strength. The second Frederic, embroiled in feuds with nobles and cities, took the bull by the horns, marched up to the gates of newly founded Berlin with six hundred horsemen, built a stronghold on the Spree, and named the wretched place his capital. At the same time he tore up the ancient charters, deprived the burghers of their jurisdiction, and in 1448 forced them to swear an oath of loyalty to him—an oath which the obedient Berliners, despite all provocations and outrages, kept for exactly four hundred years, until 1848—when they broke it for ten brief days. The iron right hand of this Elector never knew what his pious left hand was doing, for the tyrant at the same time founded a religious order, that his nobles might lead the devout life, to which he too finally retired, half-insane.

The character of this man already combines the elements that make the Hohenzollerns occasionally so interesting, and always dangerous—that mixture of brutality and sentiment, of false romanticism and genuine



perfidy, which we find in refined form even in the last ruler of the line. Of Frederic's eight successors, half were hated for their viciousness and wastefulness—they squandered the money of their subjects on their castles and mistresses—while the other four, alternating with them, were thrifty and contracted shrewd marriages.

Their heir, the eleventh of the line, was the best of the lot, rightfully retaining the name of the Great Elector, for rulers are generally judged by their success rather than by the methods they use. This Frederic William (1640–1688) was a true autocrat of the period of the Baroque, a contemporary of Louis XIV. He brought a new theme into this tribe of princes—the power-urge obviously inherited from his maternal ancestors from the Palatinate. One needs only to look at his splendid handwriting, and his head that shows a commanding personality, radiant with energy, with keen eyes, large chin and nose. He was a well-balanced and self-possessed man, yet religious and, like Charles V, imbued with a faith in the divine mission of rulers. He was one of those rare rulers whose inheritance fires them with the ambition to hand on their possessions in strengthened form—a mighty link in the chain, yet a link. He established the Prussian State as a European power even before it was called the State of Prussia. Not his conquests as a victorious general in the field nor his subsequent losses, nor even what he handed on to his heirs, earned him fear and respect after fifty years; it was his vigorous steadfastness which helped him to win out despite all setbacks. Patience counterbalanced passion in him, and his great-grandson, Frederic the Great, said of him: "If he did not master the first outburst, he always did the second."

When he came to power at the age of twenty, the Great Elector found a war in progress which was older than he, and, inside and out, the Government was in chaos. When the war had brought misery and hunger to Brandenburg, his father, one of the showy Hohenzollerns, fond of hunting and merrymaking, had made his way east to Prussia where he found a richer table and better hunting. An army!—that was the first thought of his son. He actually succeeded within a few years in training some 8000 men, so secretly that his neighbours were subsequently taken by complete surprise when faced with this armed emphasis to his threats.

He inherited, even though only by means of stratagems and semi-alliances, East Prussia, the land the Teutonic order had lost to the Poles two hundred years before, and the territory of Cleve, so that the Brandenburg Mark now extended from the easternmost to the westernmost

corner of northern Germany, though, of course, it was shredded into many pieces.

All this was possible only because of the perpetual duplicity between Hapsburgs and Bourbons, the two mightiest dynasties whose enmity at the time determined the destiny of Europe.

Louis XIV, who reigned alongside the Great Elector, was the first Frenchman to have the strength, the time and the ardent desire to turn against Germany. When he came of age, shortly after the Peace of Westphalia, he found Spain and England weakened, Germany crushed, while France, since overcoming the Huguenots, had grown sufficiently strong to strengthen the German princes against the Hapsburgs, indeed to establish the first Rhenish Confederation, which lasted ten years. The legal pretexts the King used for his intervention in Germany were as laboured as the proclamations issued to-day by the Germans, "liberating" minorities, and taking "racial comrades" into one Reich. When Louis XIV broke the peace and openly flouted the law by pocketing Lorraine and later Strasbourg, that too was done only from lust for power. It was also pure power politics when France unleashed the Ottoman Empire—or, as it was then called, "the great chained dog of the East"—against the Reich, as to-day the Germans unleash Japan against their enemies.

The important difference lies in the attitude of the enemies. To-day, in the countries that have been conquered by Germany, only a few men are found here and there to carry out the orders of the victors; but then there were powerful German princes who helped the *Roi soleil* to dismember the Reich, if only that would help reduce the power of the German Emperor. The Brandenburg prince was among these, for in order to wax strong, he welcomed any alliance with Germany's mortal enemy. That is what France became in these very decades, after the two nations had lived side by side in peace for one hundred years. The beginnings of that fateful hatred between Germans and French must be sought in the conquests of Louis XIV, which could never have come to pass without the aid of the German princes.

The three rulers who were then embroiled in struggle, now as allies, now as enemies—the "Sun King," the Great Elector and Emperor Leopold I (1658-1705)—had all three come to power in their youth and ruled side by side for thirty years. Of the three, the Hapsburg was the direct opposite of the other two. By nature he was delicate and irresolute, yet his were the greatest successes and victories. The Elector, who was just building up his own realm, was consumed with jealousy

as he saw his two rivals rest on the strength of their ancient, centuries-old dynasties. Even so the Hapsburg Empire was confined to Austria, which henceforth comprised only the ancient German heritage, not including Bohemia and Hungary.

What, then, was the German Reich around 1660? "A confusion perpetuated by divine providence," said Oxenstierna. "An irregular structure resembling a monster," said Pufendorf; and De Witt called it "a skeleton whose parts, connected by brass wire rather than by nerves, are without any natural movement." No wonder every prince gave thought merely to his own power. Above all, it was the fashion then to become a king, in order to match, at least on a small scale, the full-bottomed periwig at Versailles with its crown of gold. Thus the Electors of Saxony became Kings of Poland (1697); the Hanoverians, Kings of England (1714); a landgrave of Hesse, King of Sweden by marriage (1720); the Brandenburgers, Kings of Prussia (1701). They all required a flood of money for the effervescent courts of their time, and thus they were all dominated by foreign interests. As hostile banking houses to-day speculate on the rivalry between great industries, so at that time they speculated on the great European feuds—France against England, Prussia against Austria. It was then that the slogan of the "Balance of Europe" arose, for everyone feared that a new world war would follow the dreadful holocaust just ended.

After a shifting policy of alliances, after victories and disappointments, the Great Elector allied himself with Louis XIV, secretly pledging himself to vote for Louis or his son in the German imperial elections, and permitting Louis to gobble up Alsace two years later. In return, Louis granted the Elector an annual allowance of 100,000 pounds for ten years, which enabled him to double his army. Louis, however, also promised the Elector Hither Pomerania, so that he might finally have access to the sea. In this way the Prussian Elector traded German Strasbourg for a claim upon Stettin. Without this pact the French rape would have been impossible, at least at this particular time and without encountering resistance.

At the time, the Turks, or the Ottomans, as they were called, in league with the perpetually dissatisfied Hungarians, were moving on Vienna. The moment when the Ottomans stood near Vienna (1683) was one of extreme danger for the entire West. The Austrians at the time became the saviours of Austria as well as of European civilization—if one may be permitted this grandiloquent term, to-day so much in use again. At the same time they regained almost all of Hungary, where

the Ottomans had been entrenched for one hundred and fifty years, so that Leopold's son, still a boy, could be crowned King of Hungary at Pressburg. Since that time Bohemia and Hungary were regarded as part of the "Hapsburg Monarchy." Hungary furnished excellent troops and the Hapsburgs were no longer so greatly dependent upon levies from the Reich. The four generals who had saved Austria were all foreigners—a Lorraine, a Bavarian, a Badense, and Prince Eugene of Savoy.

### 3

THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR had swept away the medieval forms of life and with them the vitality of the arts in the German cities. Poverty and apathy had silenced the masses who were inured to suffering. Day-by-day security had become the beginning and end of all their thoughts.

But here too beauty found ever new ways to translate its message into life. Even more than in the organ music of the composers, the slumbering creative powers of the Germans rose anew in the building of great palaces and churches now reared by the princes to take the place of those destroyed in the war. Burghers and peasants, merchants and Junkers, found themselves ruined; the knights had disappeared as a class. The only ones who still had money were the princes—the "sovereigns," as they called themselves, after the model of Louis XIV. Only they and the Church were now able to give employment to all those whom the war had deprived of their livelihood. Thus arose the splendid monuments of the German Baroque.

Vienna now felt itself to be the capital of the German Empire, and the emperors felt themselves to be Hapsburgs rather than Germans. They sought to make Vienna rise in beauty. Splendid gardens outside the cities, proud approaches to their palaces, halls and flights of stairs, terraces and avenues—these were the architectural visions of the princes, who were unwilling to lag behind the emperors in splendour. Deserted by so many sects, the Church of Rome too now sought to lend even greater reality to its ancient strength.

The structures of the great Viennese architects of the Baroque, Fischer von Erlach and Hildebrand, breathe this same spirit of constraint imbued with power. Few things approach the rhythmic harmony of a Bach fugue as closely as the wonderful, gently rising flights of stairs in the

Belvedere or in Schönbrunn. They were designed for the grandeur of the great lords, for their stately tread, their attire stiff with silk, for retinues of flunkies in colourful liveries, for nimble torch-bearers, for negro slaves decked out in finery. The architects carried their rulers' lust for life into the fruit-baskets and flower-garlands on the cornices, the twined scrolls of the balconies, the wrought-iron railings of the boxwood gardens and mazes. Instead of columns, stone bodies of athletic slaves bore up the heavy beams. Masks and scutcheons crowned the cornices. Draped in heavy folds, weighed down with cornucopias, statuesque women lolled on the terrace balustrades or in the niches of the gateways. On the stair-railings cupids played the part of lantern-bearers, or, in the massive fountains in the parks, of waterspouts. Every surface was resolved into ornament that seemed to grow from within. Half-columns and pilasters, frames and mouldings, became resting-places for fabulous beasts and goddesses, for reclining and hovering figures, for shells and fruit, for scallops and borders; yet these structures, conceived in unity, rose heavenward in proud strength and challenge. Never has the imaginativeness of the German soul been more beautifully embodied in stone.

Vienna was then filled with exotic figures from the Eastern countries—Croats and Magyars, Bohemians and Italians, who were on the fringes of the imperial court and the palaces of the great. The uniforms of the soldiers were bizarre and colourful—tiger skins and silver braid adorned the Magyars in their furred shakos, standing guard under the goddesses at the main entrances. Pilgrims' processions in dark attire, rural carts loaded with fruit, wound through the narrow streets past the caryatids. The princes' rumbling carriages of State, painted in gilt and lined with pink satin, forced their way through the motley crowd, to draw up, with a cracking of whips and thundering of hoofs, at the royal stairway to the Belvedere. Garden parties were given by torchlight in the hedged parks of rural estates, and the happiest spectators were the architects when the newly built palace was illuminated for the assembled company by the magic light of fireworks.

The churches exhibited the same spirit of secular grandeur. The German Baroque divested the saints of their ascetic airs. In flowing, richly draped robes they stood by the side of gold-encrusted altars; horses and cupids, lions and angels leaned down toward the cross from the domes above; and above the tombs of the princes of the Church worldly-wise lords extended their arms in blessing over the singing congregation. The pulpit took on the appearance of an arbor of stone,

festooned with grapes, resplendent with huge gilt stars, and only the grave simplicity of the pews served as a reminder that this magnificent house of worship asked for a congregation of the people.

## 4

THUS BOTH Prussia and Austria waxed strong about the same time, around 1680. Originally both had been colonies more than anything else—Austria a colony of Bavaria, and Brandenburg of Saxony. Together with the entire East, they had also been two protective bulwarks against the Slavs. It was their geographic situation and the dangers to which they were exposed—pressure by the Turks in the South and by the Slavs in the East—that made Austria and Prussia blossom forth in struggle. At the same time both houses, the Hapsburgs and the Hohenzollerns, consolidated their power by the acquisition of new provinces, by strengthening their armed forces, and by becoming independent of France. When Louis XIV in 1685 revoked the Edict of Nantes, and with it religious tolerance, the Elector issued an Edict of Potsdam, opening his borders to the Huguenots. His sense of statesmanship recognized that often nothing was more useful than humanity, and with the settlement of some 20,000 French *émigrés* in his land, trade and craftsmanship began to flourish mightily. Hapsburgs and Hohenzollerns nevertheless distrusted each other and the gulf between them widened. "It is not in the interest of the emperor that another Vandal king should rise along the Baltic." With these deadly words from a Vienna report of State the great duel began.

Why should they not have distrusted each other! All one has to do is to compare the decadent, high-bred head of Emperor Leopold with the square cranium of Frederic William. Under the Hapsburg ruler Vienna was neither thrifty nor was it disciplined, it was, even then, around 1700, the most cultured German city, recognizing, and embarking upon, its world-historical mission.

At the same time a new power was spreading over the sandy plains of Brandenburg with vigour and freshness. With a hand of iron the sovereign mulcted the burghers of their money by means of his powerful authorities—not to squander it like his forefathers, but to spend it on

highways and villages, and, above all, on guns and soldiers, frightening the people half out of their wits.

In his old age the Great Elector built a small fleet and sent it to sea ; he called in Dutchmen and Swiss to help improve his country ; he connected the extreme ends of his realm by means of a post route ; and he founded textile mills in Berlin. Thus, despite everything, he remains an impressive figure, and one cannot help smiling at the thought of this despot who permitted no peasant in his land to marry until he had planted at least six oak trees and grafted six fruit trees. What he sought to improve was no stilted court but a country that was still in fact wild. As for his own person, he asked for little. He amused himself by chasing the pigs from the streets of Berlin, by buying songbirds in the market-place, by watering the flowers in his castle garden. In brief, he set his Prussians an example of smug civic virtue, doing precisely those things which in Austria no prince would have done, and which the people would not have liked to see him doing.

He typified anew the contrast of the Protestant upstart with the old aristocratic Catholic—his was the heritage of Luther. It was the contrast between North and South, between sandy plains and grassy valleys, between obedience and the art of living—between Berlin and Vienna, which were to fight each other during the next century.

At the time when the two protagonists in this drama, Maria Theresa and Frederic the Great, grew up at the eighteenth-century courts of Vienna and Potsdam, the situation of their families was very different. The Hapsburgs were on the wane, while the Hohenzollerns' star was rising. The ups and downs of these purely dynastic struggles that depended upon the situation of England and France ; the victories of Prince Eugene ; the rise and fall of Marlborough—all these we cannot follow here, for they have nothing to do with Germany.

The gains of these battle-scarred years were as scant for Austria as they were rich for Prussia. The great Elector's successor, once again one of the vainglorious Hohenzollerns, spent his life in show and procession, working up an insatiable appetite to become a king. The shiny new gold crowns of his cousins in Saxony and Hanover haunted his dreams. In 1701 he had himself crowned as Frederic I, "King in Prussia," with a magnificence that cost the country two years' revenue.

Then he set out to imitate Versailles. He built up a host of court officials and kept a mistress, though he does not seem to have known just what to do with her—except to be seen strolling with her conspicuously at stated hours, like the King of France. While some of his

subjects were spilling their blood in Spain, he robbed the rest of their savings by the imposition of insane taxes—he went so far as to tax wigs ! All the bristles from slaughtered hogs had to be delivered to the King, so that the royal exchequer might be at least slightly replenished by the royal monopoly on bristles. Peasants had to protect wild boar until the new King could shoot them. The King felt that the royal dignity was best expressed in the hunt, and he even had aurochs and elk imported to Prussia.

King Frederic William I (1713-1740) has been unfairly eclipsed by the figure of his more glamorous son, Frederic the Great. He was one of the ablest rulers Prussia ever had. With the exception of to-day, the spirit was never more completely ignored by German history than by this "Soldier King," who characterized all culture as the "orgies of Sardanapalus."

He was short and fat in appearance—hard-headed, simple-minded and crabby. Once divested of uniform and queue, he might have been taken for a peasant with his hand on his money-bag, for ever abusing his family. He spent virtually all his life heaping abuse on others ; yet, after the fashion of thick-headed tyrants, he was at bottom sentimental, though he permitted this to crop out only on Sundays and holidays. Thrift was the slogan of this ruler, who as Crown Prince had witnessed his father's mad escapades. He dismissed not only his father's mistresses and favourites, but even Schlüter, the great architect who had expanded the palace at Berlin for his father. In Potsdam he had all his subjects build their houses to the same height, form and colour ; at court the soup was thick, the beer thin, and the pipe tobacco of the cheapest brand. On occasions when one of his ministers would invite him to a sumptuous repast, the King would mutter and grumble but put away huge portions. He felt himself the father of a great family and was always quick to interfere. Once when he found the gatekeeper asleep while people were waiting outside, he awakened the negligent servant by smashing a window, thrashed him soundly and apologized to the people who had been kept waiting. Whenever he heard of citizens who amassed wealth, he forced them to build houses. During the summer, he spent every day from five o'clock in the morning until six at night walking, riding and driving about the city and country, armed with his stick, making inspections, always barking orders and showering abuse. At the day's end he was fond of assembling his highest officers in a bare room, the air in which was generally thick with smoke. He would then sit down to paint a wretched portrait of one of his visitors and force the poor



devil to purchase it. Pennies as well as millions all went to his exchequer.

Soldiers and money—those were the two means by which this despot had seen his grandfather build up the State. They were really one ; for of the seven-and-half million thalers which he raised by taxation of all kinds, six flowed into his war chest. In 1726 he introduced universal military service—though he was not the first German ruler to do so. Its inequalities primarily favoured the burghers. The Junkers became officers, which to them represented no onerous duty, since it was the assured career they sought—the only one for which they were fitted—the most highly honoured position in the country. But the peasants had to spend half their life—no less than twenty years—as soldiers in the service of the State, with an annual furlough of only three months. True, there were exceptions for those who had a homestead or were master craftsmen. The townspeople, on the other hand, had to pay for exemption from military service with a tax that made their hair stand on end.

Yet it was not so much the service and the money that henceforth transformed Prussia into a drill-ground ; it was the rough tone—the insolence of the officers and sergeants. It was then that practices arose that still flourish in Germany to-day. Terrible punishments stifled every virile impulse, and the fear of having to run the gauntlet kept men from uttering even a single word of protest. If there had been any remnant of the concept of liberty left among the people it was now clubbed, beaten, upbraided out of them—a process unprecedented among white nations. No wonder its consequences were likewise unexampled. The Great Elector had created the Prussian military, but it was only this grandson who invented a kind of service extending over endless years, stifling all familiarity among the people, establishing fear and submissiveness below, arrogance and barbarism above—the very picture repeated to-day with different uniforms and titles.

When in the age of slavery a man had built up his power, it was comparatively easy for him to figure as a great man in history, for no one kept account of his victims. In antiquity dictators lived by disfranchising the masses ; to-day they live on the stupidity of the masses. But the factors that contributed to Prussia's rise even then left a deep imprint upon the memory of the world. In a nation that was nominally free they created such a mixture of compulsion, hatred and subordination that two centuries later the tone of these Prussians still repels the world ; for even to-day every Berlin bank teller, while swearing at his messenger boy, springs to attention when his superior approaches. That all this

should have been accomplished without revolution, without even the smallest localized rebellion, would be possible only among a people who for two centuries had been kept in a state of fear and terror such as no other country had been suffering. The fact that this condition was not only continued, but that, after a brief attempt at freedom, it is to-day repeated in redoubled form, compels the conclusion that servility is a characteristic peculiar to the Prussians—a characteristic not shared in this form by Germans generally.

“Potsdam”—so Schelling reported later—“is the real prison of the soldiers, since there is no chance whatever for escape. On all sides there are bridges patrolled by soldiers, the only means of access to the city, which Frederic William I had made into a complete island. Here, with his soldiers under constant, close supervision, he formed the nucleus of the Prussian Army, the heroes of the Seven Years’ War. By what dreadful cruelties was this glory purchased! Here the regiments of the Guards were confined to crowded barracks. No soldier was permitted to leave the city. How many unfortunates, tortured to desperation, these silent houses have seen!”

The Soldier King could never get enough of it, making a farce of his hobby by personally drilling a battalion. It was his pride and joy to have “big fellows” hired into his service from all over the world. The fear of his own inferiority—that peculiarly German weakness, exhibited by the King in his forcible suppression of all sentiment—emerged in his passion for collecting these giants. It was his only extravagance, for he paid up to £3700 for such men. The “Parade of the Potsdam Guards,” and their famed manual of arms, were the only curiosities sought out by visitors to Berlin, while it was the opera, the ballet, the architecture that were the objects of admiration in Vienna or Dresden. The King’s highly paid recruiting agents, men of the lowest sort, earned hatred as well as ridicule for the name of Prussia abroad; indeed, once an attempted abduction almost led to war. The poet Gottsched, who was as tall as Lincoln, had to take flight before the recruiting agents—who were eager to exhibit his six-foot stature in Prussia, rather than his poetic gift.

These Prussian imports represented the more innocent forms of the trade in human beings then practised by the German princes. Frederic William was a collector and at least paid for particularly fine specimens. Other German princes, on their part, sold their subjects to England by the thousands. They were the exact counterparts of the slave trader: who until yesterday were still capturing sturdy Sudanese and Abyssinian:

of both sexes ; while the King of Prussia might better be compared to the director of a zoological garden.

Tens of thousands were thus sold by the German princes to England, which lacked sufficient troops for the war against the American colonies. The price was between £7 and £8 per soldier—though in the end the total expense came much higher. The men were prodded like cattle on the market-place and often rejected if they were too weak. When the sale had been concluded, a Duke of Hesse or Brunswick would present the British trader with a diamond ring. The subjects who were unable to escape the ruthless hand of their sovereign—and thus were sold into servitude—were not permitted to return until peace had been concluded, lest their reports give rise to rebellion. Once outside, they were cheated of their pay, for the princes put half of it into their own pockets, just as many European hotel owners to-day take their share of the tips included by the guests when paying the bills.

If anyone feels that these abuses were typical of the time one can only reply that they had no counterpart among other nations of the time. The German excesses were unique among civilized white nations, at a time when human rights were already recognized in France and America. In all the world only the German character suffered all this without rising in revolt. Contemplating these degrading forms of obedience, the observer to-day gains a better understanding of what the same nation must still be putting up with.

But even the defiant Soldier King was unable to get the better of the Junkers. For decades he clashed with them, and, while in such moods, ejected slothful counts from high office, replacing them with capable commoners. Yet in the end the King did not prevail. The Junkers not only refused to pay taxes ; they obstructed the artful system of administration which carried the King's power everywhere, as to-day it does the power of the party.

Before the Junker the Prussian State had to halt, for the *Landrat*, the local governor, appointed by the landowners like the parson, only confirmed the Junkers in their slaveholding powers over the peasants. The King, who would have liked to see the peasants get their rights, was no longer able to find out what happened to his subjects in the mud cottages on the vast potato-fields in East Elbia. There the Junker, as lord of the manor, called the tune to which the peasant had to dance ; indeed, the fanatical Soldier King even sold his ancient right of investiture to his father's vassals. These now became proprietors in the widest sense of the word—that is, they were able to take up mortgages on their

estates. The money from this wretched deal enabled the King to set up two new regiments. For universal military service was not enough. Money was needed for arms, uniforms, shoes ; and since everything had to be produced within the country, the military spirit, as the means for attaining success, penetrated into all circles. Purpose, means and obedience were the same as to-day.

When the King of Prussia at last, with a standing army of 83,000 men, had surpassed all the other German princes and almost caught up with the Austrians, all Europe wondered why he did not strike. But the Soldier King was sublimely unconcerned with politics. His sole interests were the army and administration. He resembled a housewife with many children, eager to keep order and discipline among her family and property, but never going out. The King even allowed an important English marriage for his daughter to go by default—he was too much afraid to face educated men and women. With all of his rumbling despotism, he had no faith in himself, so far as anything outside the barracks was concerned—neither in strategy nor in diplomacy. Few knew that he, like Kaiser William II much later, was satisfied to stand there and hurl threats, that his savage invective was only meant to drown out his own fear of war. Unlike his grandfather, Frederic William kept building up his army but never used it. At the *Hofburg* in Vienna, there was much ridicule for the man “who was always cocking the gun without pulling the trigger.”

What must have been the most burning desire of his successor ? To pull that trigger !

## 5

WHOEVER the son was, he was bound to rebel against the despotism of such a father. In all lands popular sympathy always turns toward the Crown Prince, who will, of course, do everything so much better than his father. In this case posterity too has sided with the prince, who represented culture against barbarism in his struggle with his father. But even a youth filled with spirit does not necessarily make every gifted young man into a hero. Lincoln achieved his position in the history of his nation not because of his log cabin and his rail-splitting, but because of the deep-felt motives that awakened his energy and that

urged him on to a great goal. Frederic the Great has neither grand motives nor goals to show, but he represents an interesting example of the German character.

As a Crown Prince Frederic II (1740-1786) definitely deserved his father's reproach that he was an "effeminate fellow," unstable and negative, who represented nothing but a stubborn opposition to everything his father was building up about him. Debts and affairs with women ; a musical inclination and a dislike of military life ; a foretaste of what the French spirit might mean in contrast to the Prussian dullness ; a quick, nostalgic glimpse of the Dresden court with its art and gallantry ; an early illness ; humiliations and thrashings at his father's hand before witnesses—all this came together to lead a versatile spirit, a sensitive heart, into hatred of the father, into contempt for men in general. It made of the storm-tossed heir the cynic he remained all his life.

An unsuccessful attempt at escape was originally supposed to have come near to bringing a deserter's death both upon the prince and upon the friend who had aided him. But the judges pardoned the prince against his father's will. He was imprisoned, while his friend was shot. That the prince was forced to witness the execution from his window was another form of that German brutality which caused the medieval peasants to implore their overlords to chop off their left rather than their right hands. Then, from the age of twenty to twenty-eight, Frederic spent half his time in his father's military service, leaving the other half free for study, music and society. In the end the father praised his capable son, while the son in his memoirs gallantly did justice to his father.

During those years of waiting a single idea germinated in Frederic's mind. It could not have been love, for he lived separated from his wife and later too rarely had any contact with women—indeed he seems to have had no sex life whatever. He loved neither the nation nor the people, neither Voltaire nor the old generals ; but, like Bismarck and other misanthropes, he spent his emotions on his dogs. All his life they lay about on his bed and his chairs, and when they died he dedicated marble tablets in his park to them, and after his death wished to be buried by their side. This general coldness was broken by one passion, carrying him away in fits and starts, like a strange current in the ocean : his passion for glory.

As a disciple of progress he renounced the love of power as such, for even then he was in correspondence with Voltaire and after the current fashion adopted all the slogans of French tolerance. As Crown

Prince he even wrote a pamphlet against Machiavelli, full of moral maxims—incidentally from pure boredom, as he admitted to a friend. Frederic never loved battle. Only once, in the defeat at Kollin, did he draw his sword. He lacked the passion for war of the Great Elector or of Prince Eugene and Napoleon. Riding, fencing, shooting—all that was implied by the discipline of his father—went against his grain; but he wrote: "I love war because of the glory it brings."

A few months after he had ascended the throne at the age of twenty-eight he deliberately provoked a war—a civil war in the old German tradition—by putting forward some hoary claims upon Silesia against the Hapsburgs. The rich heir of two strong ancestors, he risked the precious instrument that had fallen into his hands—an instrument that might have brought him the greatest success had he applied his political intelligence to it. Evidently it was also contempt that drove him to overcome his father's reputation for hesitating and to prove himself strong in battle. At the time he wrote to a friend in self-justification: "My age, the ardour of my passion, my desire for glory, indeed—to keep nothing from you—my curiosity, in short, a secret instinct, have torn me out of my pleasant tranquillity. The satisfaction of reading my name in the newspapers and then in the book of history has seduced me."

Nothing is great in this confession except its cynicism, which, then as again so often now, holds that self-analysis can take the place of morality. The motive is of great significance because for half a century Frederic's government took its direction, indeed, its purpose, from this first war. The words afford insight into the frivolous lack of responsibility which risks, squanders and undermines the life of a nation without compulsion or purpose. Bolivar, the most vainglorious man in history, was also driven by this motive rather than by a sense of freedom; but as a consequence of his passion, he brought freedom to five countries.

The enemy whose realm Frederic invaded was a woman. Maria Theresa (1740-1780) had come to the throne at the same time as Frederic; she was only five years younger. The full contrast of her character, compared to that of Frederic, is shown by the merest glance at her portrait. The lean structure of Frederic's head shows few North German traces, but Maria, ample, stately and lucid, was thoroughly Viennese. Everything about her was instinctive, sincere, high-minded; she deceived no one, yet maintained her worldly wisdom. Frederic, on the other hand, was all intelligence, calculation, selfishness; he was the cynic who deceived everyone whenever it served his purpose. Maria Theresa was an active, self-possessed woman, of motherly devotion to her

subjects, because duty and inclination coincided within her. She even made political blunders to enhance her husband's position. On the one hand there was a man who at times hated his work, who did not even trouble to look for happiness, who hated the masses and worked for his subjects as their master purely from a sense of duty. Everything about the woman, on the other hand, was productive and natural; and it is profoundly symbolic that, in the course of her twenty-three-year-long struggle as mistress of a great empire, she bore her husband sixteen children. Frederic, whose health was impaired, was not even able to beget a single descendant.

When considered in relation to their times and their offices, Maria's character appears as devoutly Catholic, Frederic's as atheistic. Her character was conservative, his liberal. Yet, though she was handicapped by many more prejudices, it was she rather than he who was loved by subjects—because she herself had loved, while he had only hated. Frederic never attained the stature of his constructive ancestor, while Maria surpassed that of hers.

The fact that an empress rather than an emperor was now in power in Vienna was a political motive of some piquancy to her enemies. For the French and the Bavarians, not having recognized the female succession, closed their ranks, and this was all the pretext Frederic needed in order to finish off the Hapsburgs completely. Against the advice of her councillors she accepted his challenge in a natural burst of resentment, but, hard-pressed on all sides after Frederic's victory at Mollwitz, had to agree to make peace. Frederic fled from this, his first victory (1741), won by one of his generals, and did not reappear until sixteen hours later, though he had at once dispatched a courier to Voltaire in France, boasting of his new glory.

At this extremity the twenty-four-year-old Empress bore her first son, "at a moment when not a single land remained in my undisputed possession, so that I did not know where to go for my confinement." The newborn babe in her arms, she entered the Hungarian Reichstag, firing the enthusiasm of the assembled lords. A Hungarian army defeated the French near Frankfort. Soon Frederic invaded Bohemia again, menacing the self-same Empress who had just ceded him Silesia by treaty. Maria's consort, a prince of Lorraine, became Emperor. A second war broke out. Frederic won again, invaded Saxony, taking Dresden and thus starting a hundred-year struggle with Saxony. The second war too ended with the cession of Silesia to Prussia.

Frederic spent the quiet decade that followed (1745-1756) living in

his elegant little palace, Sans Souci, near Potsdam, by no means like a philosopher but rather like a Frenchman of the world. In a letter he called himself the "proprietor of Voltaire"; he was the patron of a fairly good opera, was generous with artists if they were Frenchmen, worked a great deal, and often did not see his ministers for months at a time. Yet he intervened in almost every kind of procedure with decisions, most of them eminently fair, which he scribbled down in the form of marginal notes. Between times he composed pieces for the flute, wrote brilliant essays and even poems. But as a writer as well as a philosopher he lacked the most important tool—language. His French was full of errors and his German atrocious. In both languages the highly educated Maria Theresa was the superior of the *homme de lettres*—and, in addition, she knew Latin. True to his urge, Frederic at once recorded his deeds for posterity—with such speed that in 1746 he was already dictating his memoirs of 1745. Like everything to which his cold mind aspired, the King soon lost interest in glory, for he wrote now: "Glory is vain! Have men ever deserved glory? They attain fame only when they have raised much noise."

Beyond the mountains meanwhile a woman was at the helm who was as clever as Frederic but much sounder and more harmonious. "Serenity of the spirit!" she cried out to herself when still in her early thirties. "Look upon your own experiences as upon those of a stranger!"

When she had been presented with a grandchild, she strode forward in her box in the *Burgtheater* and called down into the orchestra: "Leopold has a boy!" On terms of such familiarity did she treat the Empire. She was for ever exhorting her daughters to fertility: "We need a Dauphin!" or "Your child needs company," she wrote to them, and the very next page of the letter would contain a veritable compendium of princely wisdom. Her stern morality tolerated no dissoluteness among her grown-up and unmarried sons; yet she was sufficiently wise in the affairs of state to write a flattering letter to the mighty Pompadour and to admonish her daughter to receive her father-in-law's mistress at court.

To her son, her twenty-six-year-old co-regent, she wrote:

"Your heart is not evil, but it is likely to become so. It is high time for you to abandon those jests and brilliant turns which serve only to make others sad and ridiculous. You flirt with the spirit. You chase after it without judgment. In closing this letter, I take you by the hair, kiss you tenderly and ask you to pardon my poor and tedious style, by divining the spirit whence it springs. I desire only to see you respected



and beloved of everyone, as you deserve to be, and to have you believe me to be, as always, your good old faithful Mama."

Did any emperor ever read such a letter? And what would be the history of princes, had all the mothers of kings written in this fashion!

Amid all her affairs of State, Maria Theresa enjoyed life; loved her husband and him alone; rode the merry-go-round, though she was generally with child; played cards until far into the night, then had herself driven to a public ballroom, disguised in a domino, imagining that no one recognized her while dancing. Her love of dancing may have been the only thing in the reports to interest Frederic, for he shared it. Had they met at some court function when they were both youthful heirs and danced together, destiny and diplomacy need never have transformed the two partners into mortal enemies.

Placed beside Frederic, she was indeed a child of nature, this Maria Theresa. After the imperial coronation in Frankfort on the Main, her husband approached her in his curious robes and, while thousands looked on, cut capers as "the Spirit of Charlemagne." She burst into laughter, waved her handkerchief and cheered, until the people began to roar with laughter. Such scenes were unheard-of in cold Prussia, yet Maria's royal dignity was no whit less than that of Frederic. She was a much better ruler—she loved, and that was the critical difference between them. What did life offer Frederic, the nihilist of the North?

He hated hunting as he hated everything his father had liked to do. Beauty failed to charm him, in life as well as in art. He quarrelled with his French friends. He had no children of his own and was unable to enjoy himself with the children of others. Only music and dancing diverted him. Since neither as a thinker nor as a monarch did he pursue any goal with passion, he led the life of an old eccentric, though he was barely past forty.

But then the unexpected assailed him too. Like sinister shadows the consequences of his youthful ambitions now began to haunt him. The resentment of the Empress combined with the disfavour of the Czarina, the hatred of the King of Saxony, the arrogance of the King of France; and almost overnight Frederic saw half of Europe rise up in league to destroy the dangerous ruler of the young military power.

In vain Frederic had promised the King of France aid on the Rhine, and in his testament of 1752 had recommended a similar course to his successor, if only in return Prussia were left in secure possession of its new lands. "France's natural border is the Rhine, whose course seems ideally suited to delimit the sovereignty of the two countries." About

the Germans he wrote : " This nation is ponderous and lazy, a mass that moves when driven, but remains inert as soon as one ceases for one moment to goad it." A century later, when Bismarck read this testament of the great King, which then had not yet been published, he wrote on it : " To be kept under lock and seal permanently ! "

When the European alignments began to shift, Prussia was faced with a terrible coalition—Hapsburg, in alliance with France and Russia ; even Sweden and the Reich as such joined—all because he combined control over a redoubtable army with complete perfidy. The aim of the allies was to reduce him to the rank of a margrave.

In the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) the generals of Frederic and Maria won battles in turn. As for Frederic's own talents in the field, which have been the subject of so much controversy, no layman can discuss them authoritatively, since the greatest expert, Napoleon, has declared in favour of Frederic—although with important reservations. When after the splendid victories at Rossbach and Leuthen he was beaten in 1759 at Kunersdorf, he was desperate and in his faulty French wrote a note to one of his intimates : " Two horses have been killed under me. It is my misfortune that I am still alive. I barely have 3,000 of my army of 48,000 left. . . . I do not know where to turn, and to tell the truth I believe all is lost. I shall never survive the fall of my fatherland. Good-bye for ever ! "

This note, written in a sprawling hand, is one of the finest documents of Frederic's life. Here all is emotion, all truth. The desperate love letters of the young general Bonaparte have the same ring, and we see anew that even the man of action is exalted only through passion, not through the spirit.

Berlin had been taken by the Russians and Austrians, but Frederic regained it with a coup. Yet his situation took another turn for the worse and only a miracle could save him now. The miracle happened—the Czarina died and her successor, a German prince and admirer of Frederic's, made peace at once ; indeed, he ordered his troops to turn about and fight on Frederic's side. Since France too had been weakened, Frederic, who had had his eye on Saxony for years, had to be glad in the end to get back the same Silesia which had already been ceded to him thirteen years earlier.

In those seven years Frederic had won nothing and lost nothing. Prussia, the great power he had inherited, stood firm, but Austria stood as firmly. Much effort had been spent in vain ; a million men had fallen. Since Europe was then much less densely populated, Prussia having four

million inhabitants, one million corresponds to the ten millions who fell in the last World War ; and yet the arms during the Seven Years' War were so much less deadly. It all had been in vain, from no inner compulsion—only because once upon a time a young man sought glory.

## 6

THE TWO great wars that cost the Germans so much blood and money, in the course of a century and a half, ended differently : after the Thirty Years' War Germany was reduced in size, despoiled, laid waste, a football of the great powers ; while the Seven Years' War merely did harm to the three countries on whose soil it was fought, without reducing the German territory, and excited fear rather than contempt of Prussia's power ; for the Prussian army, a bare century old, had withstood the coalition.

In this century between the two wars the glamour of absolute monarchy reached its climax in Europe. The longest reign in history—or at least one of the longest—seventy-two years, had permitted Louis XIV to unfold his gifts to a degree attained before and after him in modern times only by Charles V and Napoleon. But Louis was the only one to stimulate the imagination of his contemporaries to such a name as the “Sun King,” because he alone gathered into his hands an entire culture and, despite many setbacks, kept on developing it harmoniously. His trick of holding the classes apart, of strengthening the cities against the nobility, enabled him to control agriculture, industry and commerce by himself, though through the medium of the citizens. Thus he was able to give every Frenchman a feeling of freedom, of being overshadowed by no other class, only by the king ; and thus too he was able to rule as an enlightened despot, as a modern feudal lord. At the same time the kings in Austria were ruling along patriarchal, those in Prussia along military, lines. Though ruled by despotism the French citizen was able to maintain a warm feeling of self-confidence, such as no German had enjoyed since the flowering of the cities. Another century had to elapse before Frenchmen finally rose up to demand real political power and to revolt.

With the phrase “*L'état c'est moi*” the Sun King softened class hatreds and arranged all the classes like a great symphony orchestra, which was

not too difficult to conduct. Of course there was no equality—even in an orchestra such equality is merely on the surface. Louis' greatest mistake, that of driving out the most enterprising elements with the Huguenots, redounded to the advantage of Prussia and America.

The contemporary English rulers were stubborn rather than yielding, and thus the head of an English king rolled in the dust a century and a half before that of his French colleague. Under the protection of full civic liberty a policy of world dominance could develop in England, which unlike that of Spain did not express itself solely in rapine and trading colonies but in the great achievement of the settlement of North America. It is better to carry overseas the arts and abilities of a people in opposition to the homeland, than to foster a war at home because of opposing inclinations.

Both of these paths were closed to the Germans. They lacked both a powerful head and a self-possessed citizenry. In actuality the Reich had long disintegrated, and though its head still called himself "Roman Emperor of the German Nation" down into the nineteenth century, the election had become a complete farce, for the "Roman" element had long been surrendered, and there was no such thing as a "German Nation." The realities of Germany consisted of some three hundred sovereigns, filling their "perpetual" Reichstag at Ratisbon with empty formalism; a Reich army unequal to the strong armies of the individual princes; a Reich court of appeals whose long-drawn-out litigation was proverbial; and, finally, the Emperor himself, who occupied his raised throne merely on solemn occasions, like a president emeritus. The three hundred sovereigns, on their part, mulcted their subjects, in order that they too might have their palaces, courts, fireworks and mistresses. All this has vanished, except for a few splendid Baroque buildings.

There was no revolt in any of these many lands and principalities, even though London and later Paris had set an example. The citizenry supported or at least tolerated all these slothful, avaricious and dissolute princes. The fanfare of revolution throughout the centuries died away without leaving an echo down to the present day. All this points to the fact that deep in the soul of this people there must dwell a will to obey, taking the place of the love of freedom. The precariousness of which the German is never able to rid himself, in class as well as national rivalries—his love of appearances which so often reaches theatrical proportions—these made the commoners in the time of the Baroque ape the princes and nobles; and while the three hundred ridiculous little despots imitated the Sun King, a few hundred thousand well-situated burghers in even

more absurd fashion imitated their despots—all this even though thousands of independent Dutch and French *émigrés* in their country set them an example of how upright men should conduct themselves.

When a prince put up patents of nobility for sale, prostituting inherited honours by making them venal, the burghers were there to catch them like fruit scattered by a rich man from the balcony of his home into the hands and aprons of begging children below. When a Junker winked at the daughter of a commoner, the father at once swelled with pride at the prospect of being honoured by having his grandson born half a count. The barons bowed in court dress before the princes, and the barons' servants bowed before the barons, dressed in similar liveries. So the commoners too had to acquire court attire, carry a stick, wear a wig. They were happy to deliver bread or shoes free to the court if only they were able to paint on their shop signs: "By appointment . . ."

If letters to the Chancellor were formerly addressed to the "Honourable," the burghers now invented the term "Right Honourable," which sounded very similar but was a whole syllable longer. When a despot, in characteristic German fashion, not only wished to enjoy himself but to have legal authorization to do so—like the Landgrave of Hesse who had cajoled Luther into blessing his bigamous marriage—the law faculty of the university of Halle was quite equal to preparing a special opinion proving the sovereign's right to keep as many mistresses as he pleased, since he was responsible only to God.

Yet with all their servile imitation of French customs the Germans were far too boorish for this kind of life. The best Germans had enough insight to recognize the danger, and Leibnitz wrote: "Let us compare our household, table and manner of to-day with our former simplicity and judge on which side there is more wit."

Others sought surcease in diaries—especially court officials. We reproduce but one sample here: "His Serene Highness expressed the desire to take the baths at Pyrmont. In case no money were available, I was to provide it from my own means within twenty-four hours, at pain of execution. Since His Serene Highness, however, knew that there was no money, the same wrote to me as follows: 'Dear faithful servant! Since we see from thy respectful reports, humbly presented yesterday and to-day, that *prima pars rescriptii nostri* cannot be applied, we shall inevitably have to resort to *partem secundum* of the same.'"

There were gifted princes too. Augustus the Strong of Saxony (1694–1733) seems to owe his cognomen to the prowess which is supposed to have made him the father of no less than three hundred and fifty-four

illegitimate children.\* For the rest, it would have been more accurate to call him Augustus the Enterprising, for his ambition ran to fine flights of stairs, façades and ceilings, as well as to crowns, women, churches and festivals. On the other hand, he was not nearly as capable as his much-envied neighbour in Prussia in commanding the regiments he set up between times. True, by means of bribery and cunning he succeeded in becoming King of Poland, but this unnatural union lasted for but seventy years, while the splendid Zwinger still adorns Dresden to-day.

## 7

EVEN IN the seventeen years remaining to both of them after the war Frederic and Maria Theresa never met. A young man now interceded with the two grizzled enemies, as though to reconcile them. This was Maria's eldest son, Joseph II, he whom she had borne in those gloomy days of the first war, and whom, after the death of her husband, she had appointed her co-regent. Joseph, a thoroughgoing idealist and reformer, filled with the ambition to confer happiness upon his own country, indeed upon all mankind, admired his mother's enemy, for his fervent heart and affectionate temperament were fascinated precisely by the misanthropic coldness of the curious Prussian. This as well as his natural opposition to his parents seems to explain the sympathies of this head-strong youth—a sentiment which Frederic did not return. On one occasion, however, the two hostile camps did grasp each other's hands.

They found themselves both taking part in a common marauding expedition against Poland. It is hard to decide who was the more vicious in this first partition of Poland—the conquerors or the conquered, the despotic Czarina or the feudal lords of Poland. Neither government had any concern for the people, for then as to-day the Polish peasants and burghers were pushed about like pawns, without a semblance of law. Catherine of Russia had long observed the chaotic and corrupt conditions in Poland with a view toward liquidating the country. At the death of one of the Saxon kings, she had her own favourite Poniatowski elected. Now she offered Poland's two remaining neighbours small fragments—as a glutton, ordering a huge fish for himself, might throw some morsels to two waiting cats, lest he gorge himself completely. But Catherine also offered an alliance, which Maria could not refuse without risking war.

and which was most welcome to Frederic. Frederic, in fact, concluded three alliances in succession with the Russians, for now that they were his neighbours, they held a much greater potential threat to him than he to them. With this first partition of Poland (1772) began Prussia's friendship with Russia—a friendship that was to last more than a hundred years, that was carefully cultivated by Bismarck, and that was given up only by William II.

The little tail of the big fish that Frederic got was precious, for it was a coastal strip that at long last connected his provinces of Pomerania and East Prussia. The fact that the people of this region had been for the most part Polish for three centuries was of as little interest to Frederic the Reformer as it is to his present-day successors. It was different with Maria. "This wretched partition of Poland," she wrote to her son, "casts a shadow on my entire reign. I can find no end to this affair, which weighs heavily upon my heart, haunts me and poisons my days, already saddened." These are fine words from the heart of a woman and an empress who had just conquered her share of Poland without bloodshed—music in an age of cruel and frivolous statesmen. They were written by a woman who dealt not with the thinkers of the Age of Enlightenment, like Frederic, but with shrewd Viennese counts and priests, whose sentiments on the end of Poland were exhausted in various and sundry quips in their private correspondence.

She adopted a similarly negative attitude toward her son's proposal to "inherit" Bavaria on some cooked-up pretext, yet by an ironic twist of history Frederic now threateningly advanced into Bohemia once more, taking the field against his admirer Joseph; but this time the two aged rulers quickly reached an agreement. Maria died and Frederic wrote: "The Empress is no more, a new order begins." A few years before his own death Frederic attempted to organize a league of princes, into which he sought to bring a whole series of German rulers. This was his last endeavour directed against Austria.

Cynics may smile at the efforts of Joseph, who was still a young man, and at the final worries of the departed Empress. The bereaved Emperor sought to translate into actuality all the things about which Frederic was merely philosophizing. Joseph II was truly a son of the Age of Enlightenment. He believed in Frederic's writings, and even though he may have recognized that Frederic's policies were quite different from his doctrines, the younger man was determined to govern in the spirit of Voltaire. The septuagenarian Frederic, reading the gazettes and reports of his envoys at Sans Souci, may have been highly amused—possibly

playing a few passages on his old flute during these musings—to see another young ruler endeavouring to do everything differently from his predecessor.

Joseph meanwhile travelled through his lands, interceding everywhere. He issued decrees, made decisions, and by means of edicts rapidly brought tolerance among religions, classes and nationalities ; a policy which he had been unable to induce his mother to adopt in his long letters. He closed eight hundred abbeys in Austria and permitted only those monasteries to remain open where work was done. He granted all non-Catholics freedom of worship—the only thing they were not permitted to have was church towers and bells. He drew thousands of Rhinelanders into his territory, exempting them from taxation, settling them in Galicia, the Banat, and the Sudeten, and otherwise Germanizing his State of many peoples. He freed the peasants of all burdens that were not fixed by charter. Indeed, he did a most astonishing thing in this land of magnates : with one stroke of the pen he put an end to serfdom (1781), “ a course dictated by the laws of nature and the common welfare.” It was a venture like those of Alexander II in Russia, and Lincoln in America—two rulers who were assassinated for their pains.

Joseph's life was spared, but he no longer enjoyed it. He too came to the tragic realization of the inertia of the masses. He too recognized that the best intentions served a people nothing unless such purposes were borne up by the active will of the people ; he saw that thought above had to be supported by power below. “ All for the people, nought through the people ! ”—this slogan of the enlightened despot earned him the hatred of the nobility, as it also earned him the sentimental affection of the people. His picture can still be found in Tyrolean peasant cottages. But he was unable to revolutionize conditions by peaceful means. On the contrary, in the Netherlands the Estates rose against his arbitrary power, and in the end the benefactor of mankind had to defend with cannon what his pure heart had been willing to give away. On his deathbed he called himself the most unfortunate of men.

The great cynic was more successful at getting the better of his conscience.

Prematurely aged after the great war, though only fifty-one, Frederic retired to his fine library in his little palace at Potsdam to engage in serious work. Two spectres from his youth may well have haunted his quiet study—vainglory and reason, the demons that bound him anew in this difficult situation. The exhausted land he had hurled into war sought recovery, the spirit of tolerance sought realization. The world



had advanced meanwhile, and the sufferings of the war could only confirm the oppressed people in their demands. The reforms of Joseph had gained converts. Prussia seemed destined to set its house in order, and the ageing King now had the opportunity to realize the demands of his own youth. Or had he perhaps after all offered opposition only because his father was a barbarian? Was the love of French philosophy to prove itself nothing more than the passing fancy of a brilliant young prince?

Frederic embarked on a large scale in law reform with the creation of the Prussian Civil Code—a tremendous step forward from the wilderness of Prussian class justice into the field of social legislation. The two great jurists who drafted this code, on the basis of the writings of Voltaire and Mirabeau, helped Frederic to win his greatest victory, and this time he did not run away from it. The law had not been changed for two hundred and fifty years since the time of Charles V; right into Frederic's own time, star chamber proceedings and torture prevailed—to be reintroduced in Germany later by Hitler. Now mitigation of punishment was put into effect following the ideas of Beccaria, who held that punishment was merely for the purpose of protecting society, while Kant, with his purely ethical demands, clung to the idea of retribution.

True, the courts-martial were left untouched by the King, as they had been by his father, who, in order not to ruin the peasants through fines, had resorted to the terrible expedient of introducing as much corporal punishment as possible. Nor was Frederic able, even by forces of law, to break the power of the Junkers. When Frederic abolished serfdom in Pomerania, the Junkers paid scant heed to his edict, and the King let the matter drop. As for the schools, Frederic's reforms resulted in an increase in their number, but in no improvement. There was not necessarily any lack of teachers, but the King had decreed a dual purpose for the schools: the education of young people and the rewarding of deserving war veterans. Thus Prussian youth was for the most part educated by ex-sergeants, armed with rods. In the villages the shepherd, the night watchman, or the shoemaker performed the function of teacher; for since teachers received a salary of only about eighty to a hundred thalers a year, teaching was a spare-time profession. There were veteran teachers who could neither read nor write; even craftsmen were appointed, on the remarkable reasoning that they, as former soldiers, now led too sedentary a life and that teaching would provide them with exercise.

Where was the King to find money for the schools, if he wished to keep his army at full strength? In order to train cadets, the King actually needed monopolies on salt, tobacco and coffee—the latter also for the reason of drawing the people away from beer. Such taxes on food, in turn, could be collected only through a system of so-called “blood-hounds,” for which the King found Frenchmen most suited, paying them three times as much as was received by a Prussian Minister. Such a system made the police as all-powerful as is the Gestapo to-day. Frederic’s police were actually authorized to enter the homes of citizens at night in order to search for smuggled supplies. These hated “coffee snoopers” invariably traced down illicit traders whose punishment consisted of wheeling barrows at some fortification works. Under Frederic the police power reached far greater heights than under his father—even public sanitation was called “police science,” a name that might well be applied to all branches of German science to-day. When the complaints of the citizens were reported to the King, he replied imperturbably: “I lived on beer soup in my own youth, and that ought to be good enough for the poor.”

Frederic’s recruiting sergeants meanwhile plied their trade even more viciously than had those of his father. Captured soldiers were invariably forced to become Prussians and to shoot down their own fellow countrymen. Old engravings show how agents plied recruits with drink in order to make them sign on. Young people were given officers’ commissions, but as soon as the border was crossed they were reduced to the ranks with the help of a club. On one occasion the authorities in Mecklenburg were put behind lock and key until all the eligible young men had been rounded up; and the recruiting agents wrecked the houses of their victims exactly as do the Storm Troops to-day, down to cutting up the featherbeds and scattering the feathers—a form of vandalism that is to-day once more part of the picture. Neither in the French nor in the Austrian army—not even among the Cossacks—were the beatings as brutal as among Frederic’s troops. The King personally ordered that soldiers dismissed from the service were to have the letter S branded on their hand, “cut in deep, and they are to be retained for several days, lest they erase the mark.” Musketeers who sought to take their own lives he sentenced to running the gauntlet sixteen times in two days, “that the soldier might depart this life less weighed down with guilt.”

There is still in existence an order signed by Frederic in which he ordered his officers to give currency to alleged reports by Austrian

deserters that ten or twelve men were beaten to death daily in their army. In another order, dated 1778, he had hundreds rounded up in a Silesian town, "on the pretext of working on the fortifications," only to have them pressed into military service like slaves. When he acquired East Frisia he promised the inhabitants exemption from military service; but when six hundred men answered his call for construction workers, he had them all shanghaied aboard ships and brought to Prussia, whereupon all the rest of the male inhabitants fled across the German border.

Perhaps all these abuses were merely unintentional consequences of the country's impoverishment, of its desire for security by armed force; but what about modern tolerance, which was supposed to be the right of every citizen? Had not Frederic, during the first weeks of his reign, written the famous note on the margin of a document: "Every man is here to pursue happiness in his own fashion"—a saying which became famous in its quaint German phrasing? Now, in his old age, he put despotic strictures upon conscience, distrusting the Silesian Catholics and naming as Bishop of Breslau a count against whose mode of life the Church had protested in vain. When he had ascended the throne he had brought back to Berlin in a coach-and-four the philosopher Wolf whom his father had ignominiously driven out; now Euler, the Swiss who was the greatest mathematician of his time, was dismissed after twenty-five years of service, because of a dictatorial whim, and for some trivial incidents. "Freedom in Berlin," wrote Lessing, "is reduced solely to the freedom to market as many scurrilities against religion as one wishes. Prussia is the most slavish country in Europe."

"The press is not to be interfered with," young Frederic had ordered, and he had been pleased when the newspapers praised him in return. But on one occasion, when the *Kölnische Zeitung* attacked him in his old age, he authorized an agent to spend a hundred ducats hiring ruffians to beat up the journalist in question. The editor of the *Erlanger Zeitung* actually had to give a receipt for the blows he received to the Prussian colonel who had had him thrashed. The great disciple of Voltaire was capable of indulging in such prejudices as crossing off the list of the most brilliant Berlin students who were candidates for scholarships the name of the son of a fire captain, since "the lad should rather learn how to man the hose from his father."

"I tremble from head to foot," wrote Winckelmann, the archaeologist, after his escape, "when I think of Prussian despotism and this slavedriver of the nations. I'd rather be a Turkish eunuch than a Prussian!" The King did not even know that this subject of his was

the founder of a new science, that his subject Herder was the founder of another, and Klopstock the founder of a new literature, and that all three fled his country. When Winckelmann's name was proposed as librarian with a salary of 2000 thalers, the King wrote on the margin : "For a German 1000 thalers is enough."

Meanwhile the King amused himself with writing French verse and, during the war he had provoked, bemoaned the lot of the poor Germans who were always dismembering each other. The musician King never knew that a Haydn and a Mozart lived in Germany, even though he himself wrote 120 sonatas for the flute. He listened to a recital of Gluck's "Orpheus" by two violins and a 'cello in his chambers, and then rejected it. Bach was the only one he sent for, for two days ; but he did not retain him, even though Bach wished to stay. When the first printed edition of the *Nibelungenlied* in Germany was dedicated to him, he wrote to the publisher that it was "not worth the paper it is printed on and does not deserve to be drawn from the dust of oblivion. In my own library, at any rate, I should not tolerate such wretched stuff but throw it out." Finally, he wrote a pamphlet against Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen*, which was then filling the German stage, characterizing it as "insipid platitudes in miserable imitation of those wretched English plays"—actually annihilating Goethe and Shakespeare in the same sentence.

Under Frederic, Prussia became more and more hated abroad. "Old Fritz"—that was the popular designation of a man who had outlived great danger and now governed the country from his cloistered retreat, invisible most of the time. His subjects had to obtain special permission to travel or study outside Prussia, and thus travellers from abroad often took a longer route by stage or ship, preferring, in the words of one chronicle, to travel at greater expense, rather than chancing the Prussian border.

In no country was "Old Fritz" as popular as in America. When Pitt made common cause with Frederic, there was praying in the churches of New England for the success of Frederic's arms. Later, when Frederic's attitude toward England underwent a change and he gloated over the crisis in the British Colonies, there was talk for a moment of making his brother King of the Colonies, which were to become independent. Washington admired the old King. In his last years he was regarded as something of an arbiter for Europe. Twenty years later Frederic's picture was still to be found in many American homes, and an occasional inn in New England styled itself "The King of Prussia."

Added to all this was the valiant figure of Baron von Steuben, who has been called Prussia's only gift to the youthful American Republic. He was a Prussian officer who had been wounded in Frederic's wars. In his thirties he had had his fill of Prussian discipline, going to Paris, whence the French War Minister dispatched him to America. Though received as an emissary of France, he was, in the military sense, a typical Prussian officer, charged with drilling the young troops. Washington protected the stranger, who could not speak a word of English, against the jealousy he was bound to arouse as Inspector-General among the older native officers. The *Encyclopedia Americana* gives him the main credit for the discipline that characterized the American troops. Later too he set an example. Though rewarded with grants of land, he spent his declining years in a log cabin in Utica. Here for once was a Prussian officer who had preserved the discipline of Prussia, though thoroughly revising his ideas in France. He seemed like a symbolic ambassador of two worlds.

But where was the "first servant of the State," which Frederic prided himself on being? How did he differ from the French despot whose "I am the State" is so often held up against him? Louis had governed a far greater empire with the help of great ministers in feudal-Catholic fashion, yet had granted the citizens many liberties. A century later, Frederic, always lacking a capable minister because he tolerated none, still completely retained Luther's authority over conscience, at bottom failing to realize the slightest trace of the enlightenment of Hobbes. In theory he accepted Locke's "lawful revolution" in the event of a monarch's failure; in practice no one was permitted to utter even a word of criticism.

In her old age Maria Theresa had written: "Even if our claims upon Bavaria were better founded than in fact they are, one would have to hesitate to kindle a general conflagration, if only for reasons of common decency." With these last four words, written not for the masses or for history but in a confidential letter of exhortation to her son, the Empress far outdistanced the King, who in his works (IV, 25) professed the typically German theory: "When absolute monarchs take the field, they do as they please, wage war, and let some sedulous jurist worry about justifications."

This is language that falls sweetly on German ears. The ruler, by the grace of God, who not only breaks his treaties, but denies their validity in theory and mocks the law while putting it to work for him—such a

ruler only has to call himself the "first servant of the State" in order to become the idol of the people. A despot who starts out with philosophy, only to revert to the theory of force, calms the conscience of the German commoner—the dictator solves the moral problem, the professors confirm the solution. And once the dreaded Government itself has declared that the struggle for existence cannot be fought with law alone, the private citizen too may follow this doctrine in his business and yet go to church on Sunday with an easy mind. That was the reason why the Germans eagerly made a legend of their leader who could handle both sword and flute, who could improvise both battles and sonatas, who dwelled in mystic solitude yet was oh! so democratic; indeed, whose inability to beget offspring was even then worshipped as a sign of his devotion to his holy office.

A German autocrat who begins as a reformer will relapse into the wielder of power at the critical moment; a German citizen who begins as a reformer will prostrate himself in the face of power. Even the most eminent Germans in the end betray the spirit to force. Luther and Frederic are merely the most famous examples.

## 8

THREE YEARS after Frederic's death the French Revolution burst upon the world. Goethe described it as a great necessity for France, but one that was not to be imitated in Germany. True, the reasons for the Revolution were primarily French—the people presented the bill to the grandson of the shining king. In such crises every nation has the right to forget the achievements of its rulers, because they have long since been wrecked by weak successors. We who are accustomed to see in France the land of revolutions must not forget that the Revolution beginning in 1789 was the first one that can be called great, and that it did not follow the English Revolution until a century and a half later.

The one factor that gave the event so overwhelming a character was that it shook not only the political but also the social order on an international scale. France, the classic land of kings, had overnight become a Republic—the second in Europe, for Switzerland was the first. Among the hundreds of reigning princes, most of them distributed over Germany, there suddenly emerged to power, in one of the strongest nations, the

At first the motives impelling the German rulers varied widely. Frederic's nephew and successor, Frederic William II (1786-1797), belonged to the bad Hohenzollern strain. He desired to wrest from strife-torn France a piece of land along the Rhine. In Vienna, the Emperor wished to come to the aid of his hard-pressed sister, Queen Marie Antoinette. But when the French learned, from the secret correspondence of their royal pair, that the rulers desired to call Austria into the country, and when shortly afterwards the couple actually attempted to flee, the indignation of all patriots was directed against the Emperor and even against his son who, as Francis II, was destined to be the last of the line of German emperors.

The many princelings felt themselves in even graver danger from the upheaval in the neighbouring country than did Prussia. After the great war these privileged classes had placed themselves under French sovereignty, because it offered them better protection than the beaten Reich. But now they took deathly alarm at the fact that their patron State had undergone changes in the course of one hundred and fifty years, that the French people had awakened, and that the Revolution dared to extend its fight against Junkers and Church to their territory too. It was poetic justice for their treason to their own fatherland; but, as always, those who were later to stand before the bar of history regarded themselves as innocent and played the rôle of the accuser. In vain the Paris National Convention in the beginning, when it was still moderate, offered compensation to the expropriated lords, great and small. Landowners and capitalists on the Rhine were indignant, as they always are when the people rise. They gave refuge to their French colleagues, some of whom had fled, some been expelled, founded a counter-revolutionary centre in Coblenz and proved anew that class interests often cross national borders and transcend national interests.

For the one thing all the German princes who now girded themselves to fight the dragon had in common was the fear of world revolution, and even then they used the simile of the *cordon sanitaire*—which Europe, one hundred and thirty years later, turned against the Bolsheviks. If seventy thousand workers, employed and unemployed, crowded the Paris suburb of St. Antoine, similar thousands rendered insecure the thriving life of the ruling classes in other capitals. When the Estates General, called together in the last extremity, in a single August night abolished all feudal privileges, including serfdom, guild laws, tithes, the ground began to tremble beneath the feet of Germany's three hundred petty tyrants. To protect themselves they intervened, and as a result of

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their intervention German feudal rights fell, not in a single night, but only after a sixty-year struggle.

In their terror Prussia and Austria, the great rivals, made common cause, though they resolved to outwit each other at the end of the war. Propaganda functioned even then, and the aged Duke of Brunswick vowed in his manifesto to level Paris in defence of the Saviour and of Christian morality. That was the signal for a general uprising in France : *Levée en masse* ! The country was in danger ! All the young people were on the march and the immortal strains of the "Marseillaise" sounded for the first time in Strasbourg. Not until then did the monarchy fall, and four months later the King was executed. The interval saw the first fight of monarchist troops against the first people's army of recent history.

At that time, too, when the allied Germans whom the Russians were supposed to aid had been beaten at the Rhine, Russia seized the opportune moment to invade Poland. In the second and third partitions of Poland (1793 and 1795) the Russians broke faith with their allies as these did among themselves. Maria Theresa was dead and no one was now left to feel ashamed of the deal.

But the factor that carried the victory in that clash was not the French war machine, which was poorly armed, numerically inferior and wretchedly led. The victory at Valmy was won by enthusiasm—the great revolutionary fervour that had seized all hearts, the feeling of liberation from long oppression, the inner spark that took the place of Frederic's vainglory or the allies' greed ; it was the passion to attack, which always gains the advantage. This time it endured for twenty years, as long as the German princes continued to campaign against the new France.

And yet, the names of the youthful generals of Valmy and their strategy have been forgotten. And even to-day when those same Argonne passes have again become battlefields no one remembers that September day of 1792. Nothing remains but a comment, because it encompassed the whole world situation.

At that time Goethe, minister and friend to the Duke of Weimar, was present in the general headquarters of the German princes. He dabbled a little in war correspondence, and for the rest observed and pondered. When the evening revealed the enemy's victory, the leaders and the princes sat together, discouraged and stupefied by the quick reversal. Everyone gave his opinion as to the enemy's strength and the princes' errors, and when the fortunes of war might be expected to turn. Goethe listened in silence. But when he was asked for his opinion, he replied :

"From this day onward a new era of world history begins, and you will be able to say that you witnessed it!"

Wise men have often welcomed the defeat of their country because they have so long demanded improved conditions. Generally they have been the best heads, and the bravest too. Controversies of this kind are generally fought out in pamphlets, in memoirs, in epilogues and discourses. But this time the first battle in a great war had been fought—was still being fought, for all around there was smoke and thunder, and the lords hastened to make good their own escape. Traditionally such a failure might have been foreseen—the misfortune of a day that might be corrected, to be followed, perhaps, by twenty days of luck. This put the poet's prescience to the test, as the faces of the beaten leaders who were turning to him tested his courage. Neither a soldier nor a courtier could have given such an answer—only a man of vision thinking in terms of centuries.

Because it took the measure of this world-historical day, Goethe's remark became unique. An admonition that the vanquished should rejoice at witnessing such a day bordered on open provocation, and visualizing the scene on the stage one might expect one of the generals to draw his sword and kill this revolutionary in disguise, on the spot. But it appears no one answered except Time, which in the next twenty years of world history confirmed the new chapter in a truly resounding manner. For this reason the sentence, uttered on the evening of Valmy, represents one of the great moments of German history.

The moments that followed were wretched enough. Like all small-minded leaders, the King of Prussia had no interest in his subjects other than in their numbers. The new partitions had made him an even closer neighbour of the Russian Empire, and considerably more than half of his subjects were Polish. That a Prussian Warsaw represented a danger to him he comprehended as little as does his successor to-day. Catherine of Russia had now been victorious against Poland, Sweden and Turkey, and bore down upon Germany. Frederic William, however, betrayed his allies and at the same time, following an ancient tradition, the Reich. Ten years after the death of Frederic the Great, Prussia was inwardly ruined.

The House of Hapsburg fared no better. In quick succession young France had picked off Italy and the Netherlands. Under French guidance the affairs of the German Reich were set in order in 1797, while the German princes with utter lack of dignity curried favour with the Paris Directors. Under the stress of the first battles won by the new Republic

the last bonds holding the German Reich together were broken. In the distance the dawn of the Revolution quickly brightened into day. Over the German State lay impenetrable night.

## 9

YET ABOVE this darkness the firmament of the spirit arched in shining radiance. The same century that saw the power of Germany disintegrate under the jealousy of dynasties, under the greed of petty princes and the struggle against the ideas of a new age—that same century was the greatest ever experienced by German genius, which at no other time made so great a contribution to the world. The break between the German State and the mind was now complete.

The seven stars of German music shone for all men to see, brighter even than the stars of poetry and thought, since music speaks all languages. They were all born within a little more than a hundred years (1685–1797)—seven composers such as no other people has produced in such abundance. One built upon the other, yet were they all different. Each one was a constellation for himself, each with his own spectrum. Bach discovered eternity in music, Handel splendour, Haydn nature, Gluck the hero, Mozart heaven, Beethoven sorrow and victory, Schubert the singing heart.

From their melodies these seven inspired Germans wove a great harmony that surrounds them all with the sound of legend. Into the remote pampas of South America, the log cabins of the lofty Alps, the ships far out at sea, their music has drifted, borne to-day on the waves of the ether; and as millions of hearts and heads wax wroth at the modern despots and their slaves, German genius sings out into the world from a thousand violins, orchestras and records, begging forgiveness from indignant mankind.

Since the time from 1450 to 1550, when some seven or ten painters followed in similar sequence to form the legend of the Italian Renaissance, no such chain of kindred artists had formed anywhere. Then there had been a Holbein and a Dürer in Germany; but at the time of the seven German masters of music no other country, not even Italy, created comparable works. It was a new art, perfected by a single people, and after them their level was never again attained, not even among the

Germans. A wonderful continuity, unique in German history, linked the seven masters. It is as though one had handed a ring to the next. Handel, though after some struggle, handed it on to Gluck in London, Gluck to Haydn, Haydn loved his pupil Mozart, Mozart marvelled at his pupil Beethoven, and Beethoven on his deathbed handed on the ring to Schubert with a word of high praise. Where in other countries is there anything that can be compared to this? Among a people which, as we have seen, for a thousand years loosened and cast off all the outward bonds of ordered life, how touching is this fragile chain of tradition!

They all came from the South, the West, or from Saxony. Bach and Handel, the one born near the other and only four weeks apart, seemed to breathe new life into the Thuringian woods, so full of song and verse. Haydn, Mozart and Schubert came from Austria, Gluck from Bavarian Franconia, Beethoven from the Rhine, with an admixture of Flemish blood. Five of them made Vienna the musical capital of the world, and though they were often treated badly there they still fared better than artists did elsewhere in the Reich.

All seven of the masters sprang from the poor, symbolizing that the German spirit of music rises from the depths. The mothers of Haydn and Beethoven were cooks; Haydn's father was a blacksmith; Schubert's father was a poor school-teacher; Gluck's a hunting groom and gun-carrier. Only Handel's family lived in more comfortable circumstances. The fathers of Bach, Beethoven and Mozart were all three poor musicians who sprang from the ranks of the craftsmen—Bach himself was to be the king of a dynasty which brought forth fifty-one musicians before and after him. In Handel and Haydn, Gluck and Schubert, music seems to have surged from unknown sources. Five of the seven masters suffered the pangs of hunger in their youth. Bach, Haydn and Schubert made their way as choirboys, as Luther had once done; Handel and Beethoven with the help of the piano or organ. Gluck and Mozart, the child prodigy, fared better in childhood. All of them later passed through periods when they had to struggle for their daily bread, even after they had attained fame; only those who found a refuge abroad were ever able to cast off care.

These seven masters were representative of the German people. The German princes who during this century were engaged in administering their lands as wretchedly as possible have no share whatever in this glory of the German nation. None of them did the slightest thing for the spirit. Only a bare handful ever cared for, or fittingly honoured,

the master. Not until Handel, Haydn and Gluck were invited to London did they find appreciation. The least musical nation of Europe offered the masters of German music money and fame ; it even sought to rescue the dying Beethoven from his misery. But Paris and Madrid too commissioned Haydn to write symphonies. He ordered the text for his two most popular works, "The Creation" and "The Seasons," in England, and had to have it translated in Vienna. No German artist was ever honoured in death as was Handel, the German, in England. He lies buried in Westminster Abbey, astonishingly enough as the result of a wish boldly expressed in his own will. To this day England regards Handel's "Messiah" as almost an English work, like Weber's "Oberon" and Haydn's "The Creation" ; to this day Gluck is better known in Paris than in Germany.

A few of the princes and courts tried to gain credit from the reflected glory of these shining names, granting their owners titles and even salaries. For ten years Gluck was court composer to Maria Theresa. After the Pope had conferred an order upon him in Rome, he always called himself Ritter von Gluck—a title never claimed by Mozart, who was similarly honoured. Beethoven, the divine, gave lessons to the Archduke Rudolph, conferring immortality upon him, and upon the Princes Lobkowitz and Lichnowsky, and upon a few other counts, with his dedications.

In Vienna, amid the only society in the world that was truly musical, the princes and counts themselves actually played in the quartets they commissioned, and also provided for concerts and publishers. The Esterhazys have escaped oblivion because they turned over their private orchestra to Haydn, who struggled with it for months on one of their rural estates in Hungary where it pleased his patrons to spend the summer. The pitiful salaries which such princes granted gave them a virtual monopoly on musical composition, or at least the exclusive right for several years to have a quartet performed, during which time it could not be published. Beethoven infringed the copyright of his publishers and patrons twenty times because he was always forgetting what he had already sold.

The humiliation which these masters—with the exception of Handel and Gluck, who lived abroad—had to suffer at the hands of government and nobility represents a chapter of German history no whit better than that of the sale of Hessian soldiers to America. At Weimar court functions Bach, with his regal head and impressive stature, had to appear in the livery of a court organist, together with the other lackeys and cooks.

Later the duke incarcerated him for a month for having demanded his own dismissal after a controversy. In order to obtain an important title, Bach, nearing fifty, had to write a degrading letter to the Elector of Saxony, in which he "begged to be looked upon with favour, not for my wretched compositions but because of Your Serene Highness' world-renowned lenience." In dedication he enclosed the Kyrie and Gloria of his new "B-minor Mass." When he was called to Leipzig, one of the city aldermen recorded: "Since we could not get one of the best, we had to rest content with a mediocrity." Yet Bach cut so impressive a figure with his chiselled forehead and his sweeping eyebrows, resembling the ligatures over the quarter-note passages in his music, that even then one critic said Bach wrote "for the mailed fist as well as for the Church"; on one occasion the prince of Cassel presented him with a ring, merely for his pedal-playing.

Yet every one of these masters often lived for years at a time without encouragement. When Bach on Easter Sunday of 1729 first performed his Passion of St. Matthew in St. Thomas Church, no one in Germany learned of the event. He never heard this oratorio, or, for that matter, other works of the kind performed by others. Long after his death much of his work was almost forgotten.

At the age of seventeen Haydn was fiddling in the dance halls. He did not become known until an actor commissioned him to write the music for a farce. Even after he was famous his patron still addressed him in the third person. He complained about this when he had found himself respectfully treated in London, and henceforth saw his letters addressed: "My dear Herr von Haydn," since the prince felt that only the title of nobility would truly honour the artist. In all likelihood none of the seven was ever addressed as "Maestro." In order to assemble an orchestra, highborn music patrons would take into their service clerks, cobblers and pastry-cooks only if they could also play an instrument, and the fact that such talents were readily found points to the deep musical feeling of the Austrians. These were the people with whom Haydn then had to perform his new symphonies, with little or no rehearsal. In one of his operatic contracts he could read that a conductor was expected to be "sober, modest and honest, of clean appearance, required to have his subordinates all dress alike, in queue or snood." His fifteen Masses were too "epicurean" for the Archbishop, perhaps because the Prince of the Church himself was too epicurean; thus Haydn had to see these works forbidden. (The Bishop of Linz forbade them as late as 1907.)

This social snobbery had an even more painful effect upon Mozart, who was gay and loved people, but who was also very sensitive and easily hurt. As a famous child prodigy he had been spoiled by the world, and at the age of twenty he had seen his world of splendour suddenly vanish. When a certain Count Arco, a chamberlain, struck him, Mozart could not strike back. In the household of the Archbishop of Salzburg, whom Mozart followed to Vienna when he was only twenty-five and had already composed some of his finest work, he had to eat with the servants: "His Lordship's two personal valets sit at the head of the table. I at least have the honour of sitting above the cooks." At his departure the Archbishop reviled him, so Mozart wrote to his father, as a wretch, a scoundrel, a young ruffian, forcing him to wait for his money. In his dire financial straits he sought an appointment as organist at St. Stephen's, but without success. In the end Mozart's last weeks were darkened by the unscrupulousness of some dilettante count who was fond of purchasing the genius of others and palming it off as his own. A requiem was mysteriously ordered by this anonymous patron. Mozart, a Freemason, interpreted this as a signal for his own impending death. The day before his death, when his friends first tried out the work at his home—he himself singing the alto part—Mozart suddenly burst into tears and turned away.

In his youth Beethoven still had to dress in court attire when he played before the Archbishop of Cologne. But later he tolerated no affront to his dignity. At the slightest suspicion of it he wrote furious letters to his patrons. Once a servant sought to bar his way to the Archduke Rudolph. Beethoven is supposed to have pushed him aside and to have said: "I am Beethoven." On one occasion, when the Archbishop commissioned him to write two marches to be used for exhibition riding, Beethoven wrote back: "The horse music you ask for will be forthcoming at a gallop." He was in every way disposed to appear as the king he really was, and he liked to speak of "moral force." During his youth he had lived with Prince Lichnowsky and kept servant and horse. The greatest pianist of his time, he was then much sought after by the Viennese, who paid high admission prices to his concerts in the hope that he might suddenly begin to improvise in the middle of a new programme. Except for his deafness, he might have had a great public career, like Handel, whom he worshipped. It was his handicap that revealed to modern man the deepest secrets of Beethoven.

Because of the musical tastes of the public, life in Vienna was far more bearable for the seven masters than life in northern Germany.

During the court concerts at Stuttgart cards were played. While the greatest virtuosi performed before the Dresden court, the royal couple dined and laughed, tinkling their glasses. At the Brunswick court *concerts fortissimos* were strictly barred lest the duchess be disturbed in her card games. In Cassel an aged percussion player received double wages because the Elector liked to sit in the box above him and spit on his bald head.

In such a social atmosphere, the gift of the seven masters could unfold only through religion or cosmopolitanism—the former as a traditional form, the latter as the intellectual attitude of the most advanced. In form, it was no more necessary for them to be German than it had been for Emperor Frederic II. Their Masses were in Latin, the operas in Italian—Gluck's sometimes in French, and Handel's in English; the names of the instruments and all the musical terms were Italian—not until later did Beethoven introduce certain German expressions. Only song became German, but since it was really discovered only by the last of the seven masters, it was soon submerged in the stream of foreign languages. Above all else, their language was without words, like every climax in music.

Far from being the tradition handed down to them, music's art forms became traditional only through their work. Of the three great accomplishments of the seven masters, one, the modern opera, despite all modifications, represents a perfection of an originally Italian art form. Schubert's discovery of the song, on the other hand, was as startling as the discovery of America; the development of German symphonic music from traditional forms resembles the development into a hero of a boy at play. Had the Germans given the world nothing but the fugues of Bach, the chamber music of Haydn and Mozart, and the symphonies of Beethoven, German genius thereby alone would have atoned for all the misfortune the German sword has brought upon the world. Actually all seven of the masters were at home in all of these forms—Beethoven in the opera too, Handel in the symphony, Schubert in the trio—and thus the miraculous art of the centuries came into being. When one steps back far enough from the works of the seven masters to envisage them and hear them as one, one is reminded of Peter Vischer's tomb of St. Sebaldus, issuing from the hands of a father and his five sons yet shaped into a single entity.

The secret of their kinship lies in the fact that they all derive from the self-same genius. If we compare the two who are remotest from each other—Handel in all his splendour and Schubert in his feeling, or even



Gluck's three-dimensional music with the broad canvas of Haydn—we still find that they are far more closely related among themselves than a single one of them is to any master of the nineteenth century. True, there are many transitions—from Schubert to Weber, from Gluck to Wagner; Beethoven himself is one of the greatest of all the bridges. Why then does this special kinship sound nevertheless from the entire works of the seven masters?

It is because they were all introverts. Sound instinct and a simple life guarded them from purely worldly passions, consigning them to the realm of secret and private feelings; with them even love remained an emotion, never becoming an adventure.

Bach was the only one to continue his dynasty with thirteen children, most of whom were eminently musical. The concerts he held in his home really established German family music. The other six masters had no children who played any part of importance in their lives; nor, for that matter, have they great passions to show. Haydn and Mozart both married the wrong woman—the sister of the girl they could not attain. Handel, who lived in London as a great lord, the director of the opera, and Gluck too, who went on concert tours of Paris, Rome, Copenhagen, had many adventures, but their love affairs determined the line of their work no more than Mozart's gay escapades did his. Schubert and Beethoven lived almost without women.

Such balance protected the purity of their works, for composer and philosopher draw their inspiration alone from inward sources, while poet and painter seek and need models. Constant good health kept five of the seven masters in complete equilibrium. True, Handel and Bach turned blind in old age, but by that time their work had been completed. Despite his delicate health, Mozart's strength was impaired by illness only toward the very last. His premature death had a metaphysical reason and was logical, like that of Schubert, Raphael, Giorgione, Byron—for nature drains these exceptional cases of all that is within them in a short time, only to turn to other individuals for expression. The very perfection with which Schubert and Mozart began and which none of the other five masters showed in youth—not even Beethoven—presaged their brief careers.

These biographical facts cannot fail to astonish us, especially among musicians, the most sensuous of all artists. The life of renunciation earned the work of the seven masters not merely balance but also an abundance attained by no other great composers. Musicians in general work harder than poets and the output of both painters and composers

is generally greater than that of most authors ; but the total works of the seven masters are almost incalculable. The works left behind by Schubert at thirty-two and Mozart at thirty-five, the opus numbers attained by Bach, Handel and Haydn can at best be compared with the prolific work of Titian or Rubens. In speed of workmanship Mozart, with "Titus" and "The Magic Flute" completed in one year, and Handel with his "Messiah" written in three weeks, have been equalled later only by such men as Rossini and Verdi.

This concentration, so necessary to wrest great abundance from genius, was possible for the seven masters only because they held aloof from the struggles of the world. Each of them had his worries about position and daily bread ; each had to impinge upon the world of the nobility, which gave him his living ; each had trouble with conductors, publishers, agents—but none was consumed by ambition or avarice or involved in court intrigues. The State did not exist for them, and all that happened in this century remained without effect upon their creative work. Not until the next century do we find Beethoven affected by it.

They all sat alone in their retreats and each for himself created the echo of a vision in solitude, ever listening to the inner voice. And since the lives of these masters flowed in so even a course, their creations rise to heights never attained by the traditional music of the Italians. From Mozart's "Figaro" to the last great fugue of Beethoven, from the most worldly to the most transcendental work of the seven masters, there is less distance than from them to Wagner. For, to say it briefly, nothing in the microcosm of these works is sultry, morbid, ambiguous, sexual, decadent—as later in Wagner ; and when we compare Schubert to a spring, Mozart to a forest brook, Gluck to a deep lake, Handel to a waterfall, Bach to a stream, and Beethoven to the ocean, the clarity of these waters is all the more astonishing because they are all German and all belong to a background in which men otherwise seem to surrender passionately to every form of turgidity.

Among the seven masters there is one pair that is Germanic, and another that is Latin. Bach and Beethoven, the aspiring, might be called Gothic ; and they are opposed by Gluck and Mozart, harmonious children of the South. Both of the latter developed the Italian opera along German lines—Gluck the tragic, Mozart also the comic. If one wanted to represent their transformation of the southern message in music, one could find no better examples than the ballets in Gluck's "Orpheus" or the Aria of the

Roses from "Figaro." The works of these two masters might be compared with those German town halls which still rest on Romanesque arches below, while up above the windows are already pointed in the Gothic style. Gluck and Mozart did not lose their sure touch through the Italian influence, like Dürer and so many German emperors. Their Roman pilgrimages remained no more than sentimental journeys.

The French look upon Mozart as their own, and the world in general likes to forget from whence he came. And indeed, there are in his works passages—and among them some of his finest—in which he is as little German as is Goethe in certain places. But then again, there suddenly open up, as in "Don Giovanni," such gloomy perspectives, so tragic an urge, that one seems to be hearing *Faust*. Even more than with the five remaining masters, the music of these two Germans shows itself to be an art which, while springing from national sources, at its best completely transcends the national character.

Among the seven masters the oldest and the youngest, Bach and Schubert, represent the opposite poles of the German character. Bach combines music with the Faustian, searching side of that character; Schubert with the imagination. Bach always seems to have his face turned toward God, though he never abases himself before God—he is devout and virile; and while his Masses are composed in Latin, his choir music fits all religions. Broad and active, a son of Prometheus, he rests in himself and has made his peace with heaven. No poet ever laid open man's relationship to God so clearly as Bach, who was forever worshipping while asserting himself. That is why his church music has nothing to do with saints or hermits; it is forever abuilding. This rise and fall, this ebb and flow infinitely repeated, this energy—they all make him unique among the seven masters. Thus he stands—placidly facing destiny.

One might say that Schubert possessed everything Bach lacked, and vice versa. Here, where everything flows in everlasting melody, the ascent from man to the angels succeeds without effort, nor does the descent hold renunciation. A true son of the goddess of music, a denizen of heaven in disguise, he seems to roam the earth dressed as a wandering minstrel, striking up tunes for the dance, such as he had heard in the taverns and among the peasants. Walther von der Vogelweide seems reincarnated in him. But then, suddenly and unwittingly, his divine blood rises and bears him aloft; his tones become more transparent and all at once he is out in the open, translated into the jubilant cascades of unearthly music into which he has transformed a simple Austrian folksong. Everything with Schubert is water, nature—he seems to live with

elves and water sprites and at the same time with their hunters and enchanters.

While Bach's music rises from the province of mathematics and possesses secret links with Kepler's Music of the Spheres, the music of Schubert is altogether of the rustling of the trees, of springs and lakes, of overgrown islands and delicate willow groves. Bach descends from the stars down to earth; Schubert soars from the earth into the blue sky. Yet both represent the German character at its highest. Bach's German soul is best recognized when each of his pieces collected as in the "Well-Tempered Clavichord" is compared to an item in Dürer's "Green Passion." To achieve the reverse, one need only listen to the adulteration of the first prelude by the French "melody" with which Gounod cloaked it.

Weaknesses and virtues, in the words of Goethe, grow toward darkness and light from the same forces, like a tree; and thus it is with people too. To the same degree to which the German character in social life sinks into darkness and confusion, until in the State its weaknesses reach the proportion of crimes—to that extent it rises in single individuals to such a height and into so pure an air that time and again the world marvels at such personalities. In these seven masters the imagination of the Germans, freed of the dream of world dominion, liberated of all strivings for reality—indeed, of the very words and thoughts of the poets—reached its acme of perfection. When Beethoven's Fifth Symphony sounds, or the overture to "Don Giovanni," or the blessed spirits in Gluck's "Orpheus," or the Sanctus from Bach's B-minor Mass, or Handel's Hallelujah, or Haydn's First Trio, or Schubert's final Quintet—listening to these the peoples of the earth feel: *This is the message of the Germans to the world.*

## 10

IN THIS same century German cruelty again attained the heights of the Middle Ages. While the whole West, including Italy and the Nordic States, purged the body politic—violently, when necessary—the Germans still indulged their love of executions; and their woodcuts and engravings show how attentively they watched such spectacles. As late as 1760, not only witches but little girls were killed as sorceresses in Bavaria. As late as 1813 women were still burned at the stake, and on the Gartenplatz

in Berlin a man was broken on the wheel in 1838, just one century before torture once more appeared in the concentration camps. Christian Wolf, the philosopher, had barely managed to escape the Prussian King and the rope that threatened him. The same King had "disobedient and truculent girls who insisted on having their own way" locked up in penitentiaries; at the same time he presented the Russian Czar with a number of armourers from Solingen as a gift. Moll, the inventor of the modern loom, was murdered in 1682 for practising witchcraft. The paddle-wheel steamer of the Frenchman Papin was smashed as the work of the Devil by the fishermen of Fulda in 1707. Gericke, Lord Mayor of Magdeburg, who invented the first electrical machine and the air pump, managed to go unharmed.

About the year 1700, eminent scholars, like Thomasius in Leipzig, were fighting German cruelty, as were the growing group of the Pietists—though these also fought the philosopher Wolf, for defending the heathen Confucius. At first the Pietists comprised the best circles. They tried to rouse the German people from their barbaric instincts; wrote German instead of French; sought to replace beer, the favourite expression of German stolidity, with coffee and tea; worked through the medium of magazines and letters, and met with success as well as failure. Not until they turned against enlightenment did they get their title and did their activities take on the flavour of sanctimoniousness.

Aboveall of them rose Leibnitz (1646–1716), who was of Polish descent, the first German who was a European. Two hundred years after Erasmus he dared to call himself a citizen of the world. The nature of this lively sage is best grasped when his head is compared with that of Spinoza, his greatest contemporary. Both heads are narrow, high of brow, pale. But while Spinoza's deep eyes with their strongly arched brows give an impression of Gothic aristocracy, Leibnitz with his broad mouth, thick nose and widely separated eyes shows himself as the friend of man, revelling in activity—a man whom everyone would at first glance take for a reformer rather than for the philosopher of his age.

With his radiant passion Leibnitz was one of the greatest bridges from mind to State in Germany, apart from Erasmus, Luther and Goethe; for together with Pufendorf he was perhaps the only German whose influence was felt at the courts. In founding, or stimulating the founding of, academies in Berlin, Hanover and St. Petersburg, he indicated his world perspective, and he wrote to Peter the Great: "I am not concerned solely with my own fatherland or any other single nation; my aim is

the welfare of all mankind." Yet he wrote for the most part in French or Latin and was courtly in manner, though all his life he fought for popular education and technology; understanding the realistic strain in the character of the Germans, which is so easily confused by their imaginative learning, he prevailed upon the princes to build canals and mines. He visited Louis XIV in order to suggest to him the idea of the Suez Canal, negotiated with the Czar about serfdom, proposed a sign language for scientists—indeed, he expressed the opinion that Europe must be transformed into a union. And all this while he was rebuilding the world in his own system of philosophy, which continued to exert its influence beyond Goethe.

Kant (1724-1804), the son of a saddler, was Leibnitz' heir, especially as a pacifist. In his treatise "About Perpetual Peace" he recommended disarmament and arbitration, proving to the world for all time that there were always people in Germany who hated war and did not seek power. But even as a prophet Kant remained a cloistered scholar, and the fact that he did not leave the town of his birth for sixty years is a new symbol for the isolation of the German spirit. True, a new Alexander might have sought out this Diogenes; but no one did, and Frederic the Great took no notice of him.

But while rethinking God and the world in his magnificently built head with its delicate skull, he concealed his convictions; in the war he was first for Prussia, then, when the Russian troops came to Königsberg, for the Czarina, later once more for Prussia. "I do indeed think a great deal," he wrote to Moses Mendelssohn, "with the clearest conviction—things I shall never have the courage to say. But I shall never say anything I do not think." Completely resigned about the German State, he too wrote down his project for disarmament as though in a vacuum. An incorruptible ethical philosopher, he professed his support for "the Great Revolution" all his life, and said that "all the atrocities now happening in France are insignificant compared with the continuing evil of despotism which formerly prevailed in France, and in all likelihood the Jacobins are quite correct in everything they are now doing. Let no one prate about national pride. I prefer to recognize the merits of other nations before those of my own."

Unfortunately he never said things of this kind publicly, but only in conversation with students who recorded his remarks. Similarly he wrote down on a loose page, which was later found: "The State is a people governing itself. . . . Monarchs exist not for the benefit of mankind—not even for the benefit of the nation, but only for the prestige of the

State, for outward appearances." When the King of Prussia, on the occasion of a certain criticism of religion uttered by Kant, wrote an insolent note in which he had the temerity to threaten Kant with "Our Royal Displeasure" in case of repetition, Kant noted down: "Recantation and repudiation of one's own inner convictions are disgraceful; but silence in a case like the present is the duty of a subject; and if everything that one says must be true, that does not mean that one has the duty to proclaim all truths in public."

Thus wrote the greatest German savant in 1794, long after the outbreak of the Revolution which he entirely approved, on a slip of paper which no one ever saw while he was alive. It was written not merely as the silent answer of a subject to his King, but in order to conceal henceforth what the King had forbidden as dangerous to youth. At the same time Kant made no public statement of any kind when Poland was dismembered right under his nose. Once again it was the case of Luther, though far less significant in its consequences; yet in the case of Kant one must admit the highest moral standards, for it was precisely Kant who called only that act moral which sprang from duty rather than from inclination; it was Kant who bound men to intervene openly against despotism, Pietism, barbarism, of which he purged his world picture. Kant resembles those great physicists who devise and give to the world a new theory, but never trouble about its application in the service of mankind. With all due respect, the question arises whether this is permissible to a philosopher who within a few years had drawn the attention of half the world to his epoch-making work, in which he reaches important conclusions about just such problems of ethics. In contrast to Leibnitz, Kant remained cold in his grandeur, failing to radiate the fire of Beethoven or the light of Goethe. On the contrary, as an individual he shrouded himself in the rotating nebula from which his ingenious cosmogony brought forth sun and planets.

Beside him shine his five great German contemporaries—Lessing and Klopstock, Herder, Wieland and Hölderlin. All of them were more or less Kantians.

To an even greater extent and more fervently, delimiting their position between mind and State, they lived openly as citizens of the world; they turned away from a homeland in which they saw only slavery and despotism to the outside world whence came freedom. All were friends of the Great Revolution—Lessing, who did not live to see it, was joined to it through all his works.

Hölderlin wrote about the German character in such a way in

his most important work, *Hyperion*—that one dares cite but sparingly :

Barbarians of yore, grown even more barbaric through hard work and science and even religion, utterly incapable of any divine sentiment or of appreciating the graceful aspects of life, offensive to men of good will in their exaggeration and servility, dull and discordant like the pieces of a discarded vessel. . . .

'Tis a harsh word, yet I shall voice it, for it is the truth : I can think of no people more disjointed than the Germans. Craftsmen there are, but no men ; thinkers, but no men ; priests, but no men ; masters and servants, youths and staid adults, but no men. . . .

Your Germans like to stick to what is necessary. That is why they bungle so much of their work, why so little about them is free and easy. Yet all that might be overlooked, did they not lack all feeling for the good life, did not the curse of godforsaken unnaturalness rest upon the people. . . .

Klopstock had fled to Denmark, from Prussia ; yet later, as a man in his sixties, he publicly bemoaned the fact in Germany itself that it had not been the Germans who first flung the banner of freedom to the breeze. Made an honorary citizen by the French Republic, he saw himself deserted by all the German princes and classes, and became dependent for his livelihood upon the Danish King, who was an admirer of his and granted him an income. Wieland too wrote for the great revolution and even before it expressed the view that he would not at any price care to live under the bludgeon of Frederic the Great. Yet these men were the recognized Voltaireans among the Germans.

Wieland called his art "the only thing that can make me immune to the misfortune of having been born in Germany." That he meant only Prussia is shown by a delightful sentence in another letter : "Vienna ought to be to Germany what Paris is to France, and all of us ought to be in Vienna : what a fine thing that would be !"

Herder, the son of a poor East Prussian sexton, had escaped the thrashings of his schoolmaster and his minister with the help of a Russian surgeon who, during the war, took the boy with him. Before leaving, Herder had to swear that he would return to Prussia upon attaining military age. But he ordered a ring set with a stone on which was pictured a liberated bird. After the Seven Years' War he compared Frederic the Great with Pyrrhus, adding that "the philosophy of Frederic and of Voltaire has spread, but to the injury of the world. Frederic's precept has become more harmful than his doctrine."

Lessing, who like Klopstock was educated in schools in Saxony, was



the son of a clergyman. Even at an early age he was ill-disposed toward all religion. After Hutten, he represents the second great journalist among German poets. He was able to follow the events of the day freely, for he had no professor's chair or preacher's pulpit to hold him back like Kant and Herder, and thus he lent the finest expression to the idea of world citizenship, coining the classic phrase: "Patriotism is a heroic weakness"—which alone was sufficient to make him hated in Germany, and perhaps not in Germany alone. In Lessing the struggle between nation and mankind was heightened to tragedy; for while professing to be a disciple of Diderot, calling himself a citizen of the world in the Voltairean sense, as an aesthete he fought against the stilted drama of the French. Inveighing against the "damnable galley-ship Prussia," he said that no man in his sound senses could live in a city like Berlin; yet he glorified the German spirit in a comedy which made a hero of an officer of the time of Frederic the Great while the villain was expressly characterized as a Frenchman. When he sought to attack the petty German tyrants in his plays, he had to shift the scene to Italy, which he worshipped as the seat of the finest in art. He got on best with the Jews, and of his friend Moses Mendelssohn he left a dramatic portrait in *Nathan the Wise* which sought to train whole generations of Germans in tolerance in so far as school and theatre were free to teach doctrines of this kind. For in the eighteenth century the theatre was the only place where the enlightened commoner could have his own way.

## 11

SCHILLER (1759-1805) stood head and shoulders above all five of these poets, both in fame and in genius. In him the passion of the spirit was not so strong as, for example, in Lessing, but his dramatic talent was so much greater that his effect was felt more widely and endured longer. He was Germany's greatest dramatist, not even excepting Goethe, and to this day his only serious rival on the German stage is Shakespeare. For ten years he was the most widely played and perhaps also the most widely read author in Germany, and his popularity survived the struggle around his ideas, which gradually began to gather dust. This evolution of Schiller's glory was foreshadowed in his own life.

The son of a Württemberg army surgeon, Schiller's own youth was

smothered in drill and terror in the "Slave Plantation," the local school maintained by the duke, and thus his passionate aversion to despotism sprang from deeper sources than that of the other poets. The duke, whom he had to serve until his twentieth year—"Old Herod," as he was called—was little better than a slave-trader. When Schiller, at the age of eighteen, wrote the *The Robbers* and secretly read the play to his schoolmates, the uproar was so great that he had to flee, and when he had the piece printed, he inscribed it "*In tyrannos!*" Thus Schiller's first work bore the same motto as Hutten's last. It was a chaotic confession rather than a work of genius, and the question was whether this heedless flood could be channelled; for had Schiller remained as he was, he would have spent himself to no effect, as happened to half a dozen other young men among his contemporaries who were perhaps equally gifted.

In this first crisis—a crisis from which creative minds are sometimes saved by a woman—Schiller, who knew nothing about love or nature, and learned nothing about it later, experienced two cathartic events of a different kind. Just before he reached the age of thirty he had become professor of history at Jena, where he again showed his great creative talent. But at the same time the revolutionary youth, who had spent ten years writing the first plays with a social content, now saw at a distance the reign of terror in Paris, while his own enlightened sovereign, the Duke of Weimar, permitted him the fullest liberty, allowing him to say and write what he pleased in return for his salary of two hundred thalers. Into this sudden surge of freedom came the figure of Kant, whose moral imperative struck Schiller as forcefully as did his aesthetics. When Schiller read that art stood midway between freedom and nature, he felt that the words were directed at him.

Even then Schiller suffered from a lung ailment that kept him from all strenuous activity, casting him instead into a sexuality that must have been barren and empty, judging from the lack of convincing heroines in his works. At the same time his imperious character, his love of beauty, and the blandishments of glory had made him pretentious, though he was very poor and had to look for support to the King of Denmark who, in a remarkable letter, had offered him an income. Yet Schiller at times lived with three women at the same time, demanded a carriage, horses and servants, though he was poet enough suddenly to exchange all this for the tranquillity of his study. But while he never made the slightest concession to any prince, while he, in contrast to Kant and Luther, openly spoke his mind, deep down in his heart he turned against the Revolution.

This middle position—the position later taken by the German mind in regard to Bolshevism—aided the poet's works. For even in his most mature plays he never quite lost the dash and the pathos of youth, while even his weaker ones are invested with the philosophical maturity he acquired only in his thirties. Withal he remained the citizen of the world—a fact of which there is no more telling proof than the list of his eight historical dramas. Seven of them deal with foreign nations; only one is German—*Wallenstein*; even *Wilhelm Tell* cannot actually be called German. All Schiller's teachings were imbued with the spirit of tolerance, anti-clericalism, internationalism—directed toward the brotherhood of man. The heart of this most popular German poet did not even beat faster as he watched the disintegration of the Reich and the first victories of Napoleon over Germany; for he felt that Germany's mission lay not in power, not in Prussia, but in Kant, in Beethoven—perhaps in himself.

Schiller's proud bearing, his complete alienation from the people, the entire lack of any popular touch in his works, the aristocratic frigidity of his nature—all these sometimes made him seem like a courtier; and Madame de Staël found him better suited to wear court attire than Goethe. In quick succession he received the charter of nobility from his Weimar sovereign and the honorary citizenship of the French Revolution. All his life, in everything he wrote, he remained true to himself—that is to his changed views—and the fact that the red-handed bandit and Jacobin of his youth gradually grew into a pale poet-philosopher was due to a turn far more organic than the similar developments of Luther.

During all these inner upheavals of his last years Schiller gave his contemporaries the heroic spectacle of a man embroiled in a fight that grew more and more passionate, who time and again conquered his mortal illness through work. Of all the trials this man of genius learned to bear the hardest of all was to recognize a greater man by his side.

Schiller's hatred of Goethe that speaks from his early letters turned into friendship in the same way that his Brutus-like attitude changed into a demeanour of balanced wisdom. There is tragedy behind this change—tragedy of the kind peculiar to Schiller, a tragedy unknown to the German people. As in the case of the German emperors, it has been crowded out by a commonplace legend—a legend which Goethe did everything to make acceptable, in order to show Schiller in the best light. To-day the two poets lie buried side by side, their bronze caskets so close that not even a hand can be squeezed between them. The advantage which Goethe derived from this friendship is readily calculated;

the advantages which Schiller derived from it, in life as in death, are incalculable.

It was a meeting of two minds in the finest form to which the German character ever rose : the brooder met the visionary, the metaphysician the searcher, the dramatic thinker the lyrical creator. Schiller, who took everything by storm, represented the German fusion of vision and energy to a greater degree than Goethe ; indeed, of the two it was Schiller who was the more typical German. The German people have felt this instinctively ; that is why they have made him their favourite poet. Schiller, above all, lives on in the German heart as the so-called poet of freedom ; for the Germans keep freedom as a kind of Sunday Muse. They dream of it as a poor man in the night dreams of walking arm-in-arm with his beloved in the splendid garden of the rich man, from which in reality a fence separates him : yet were the gate suddenly to swing open, he would take to his heels. All this would be impossible in the case of Goethe, who actually never speaks of ideals without interposing himself, while the more abstract Schiller affords broader vistas into better times for which, after all, one is still at liberty to hope. That is why Schiller is so much closer to German popular sentiment : he forever holds out to the people what they do not possess, and what perhaps they do not even wish to possess.

"The German Reich and the German nation are two different things," Schiller wrote. "The majesty of the Germans never rested upon the heads of their princes. Aloof from politics, the German has established his own set of values ; and even should the Empire fall, German dignity would continue unimpaired. . . . To the extent that the political structure is shaken, the spiritual structure grows more and more firm and perfect."

A great Frenchman later recognized what happened in Germany at this time. "The capacity to discover general ideas," wrote Taine, "is a form of the German intellect. From 1780 to 1830 Germany produced all the ideas of our age. No other nation and no other age ever possessed this capacity to so high a degree as the Germans."

If to this sum of ideas, which lead from Kant by way of Herder to Schiller and Goethe, are added the seven masters—whom the Frenchman does not even mention—the supremacy of German genius in the world of that time becomes evident. Goethe and Schiller, Mozart and Beethoven, were all born in the course of twenty-one years, a meteor shower of the kind astronomers occasionally predict, though few

astronomers of the spirit have ever recorded a phenomenon of the kind.

We are now approaching the loftiest among the German figures.

## 12

GOETHE (1749-1832)<sup>1</sup> stands alone in Germany ; and in all the world he can be compared only with Leonardo da Vinci. His spiritual ancestors dwelt on the Mediterranean near the shores where Plato and Archimedes were wont to stroll ; but this line of descent must on one occasion have been broken by an escapade on the spindle side, bringing an infusion of Germanic blood from the world of mists and witches.

The English have produced a greater playwright ; the French two or three philosophers of greater compass ; the Germans themselves, at least in Mozart, have projected emotion into a harmony Goethe attained but rarely and late.

The reason why he had no peer lies in his purpose, which was less to create works than to develop himself through his works, regardless of whether they were perfect and whether they would be understood. This explains his wanderings from nature to government, from philosophy to craft, from thought to action, and back again along these same paths. Like Leonardo, he tested everything himself, for ever finding new approaches to knowledge ; thus he concerned himself with almost as many things as Leonardo, though, unlike Leonardo, he was not content with a note in his diary, but pursued many things for decades without ever reaching a goal. These adventures were all the keener since he could not know that he was to live to so advanced an age. Goethe never really entertained the purpose attributed to him—of desiring to make his life a work of art ; yet it turned out to be one.

If the world in the end rated him as a poet, as Leonardo is rated as a painter, this was correct—as both developed one branch of art to perfection, handing it on to posterity. Yet neither of them would be what he is to-day if only the paintings of the one, only the poems, novels and plays of the other, had been preserved. The legend of greatness twines about these men because they were both universal,

<sup>1</sup> The English translation of the present author's Goethe biography contains but half of the three volume German work.

because over and above their special arts they were prophets and sages.

Aristotle too was universal, as were Bacon, Montesquieu, Erasmus ; but they lacked the special genius of perfection in one branch of art—a perfection that might have enabled them, as it were, to interpret their less perfect vision in other fields. No single work from their hands exists in which they offer an example of their universality—a single canvas, a poem of thirty lines from which the sum total of their being speaks as though by divine revelation. In Leonardo and Goethe definite mastery was combined with an indefinite sequence of quests and realizations.

In Goethe we find a man who sought to expand and develop in every direction, and who brought to this restless aspiration a skill in projection which he kept on developing to a constantly higher degree, until in the end he was able to hand on to posterity his experiences and reactions in perfect form. In his verses he has given his wisdom to the world in a form which has never been matched in fullness by the wisdom of, let us say, Kant or Aristotle, whose wisdom had to be interpreted by others. Goethe's rhymed verses, such as in *Faust*, readily lend themselves to quotation, though they are difficult to translate.

Yet Goethe himself first had to create this means of expression, just as Leonardo kept on making new experiments with pigments. The German style which Goethe found and practised as a Leipzig student was affected, attuned to the hackneyed rhythms of a music-box. Only later at Strasbourg, when at the age of twenty-one he fell under the spell of a true passion, did Goethe almost overnight begin to write a new German—a tongue that expressed itself in half a dozen immortal poems and, a few years later, in the first scenes of *Faust* and the *Sorrows of Young Werther*—in verse and prose at the same time. This was the third creation of the German language, almost three hundred years after Luther and six hundred years after Walther von der Vogelweide. All three masters broke through into natural, picturesque speech, from Latin or French art forms ; and, like Luther before him, Goethe now breasted the stream of his mother tongue, past rapids and currents, gentle inlets and rocky cataracts, for ever parting the waters with the bold arms of youth, for ever conquering and making headway.

The impulse that Luther took from the people, Goethe took from nature. He was less concerned with the people, or even with the characterization of certain classes of people ; in this respect Shakespeare was far superior to him. Goethe portrayed men singly, as Holbein did,

without explaining them. He has nothing in common with the school that derives character from background. On the other hand, Goethe regarded education as of critical importance, and to-day, a hundred years later, certain of his modern proposals have been taken up by the collectivists. But Goethe did not proceed from the social problem, for he believed in the power of nature rather than in the power of society. Just as he trained himself to listen to his own inner voice and to develop his own endowments to the highest possible level, so he reduced all his characters to their own inner essence. An abiding faith in the fruitful elements within every human heart, a tireless striving to strengthen these elements within himself, filled Goethe all his life—indeed, kept him alive.

Passionately pitted against this faith were the sinister urgings within him. He recognized them and acknowledged their validity, fighting them only when they endangered the whole structure. "All your ideals," he wrote to a friend of his youth, "shall not keep me from being true and good and bad, like Nature." Later he wrote down these verses :

Two kinds of benison be there in breathing,  
The one in drawing, the other in heaving.  
One doth oppress, other refresh,  
So strangely doth all that liveth enmesh.  
Thank thou thy God that he press thee,  
And thank Him too when he setteth thee free.

Thus Goethe never fell into the optimism of Leibnitz, who called this world the best of all possible worlds. At no time in his life did Goethe feel himself to be the darling of the gods, or a demigod ; it was the Germans who falsified his picture into that of a young Apollo and an old Olympian. In reality Goethe was, in youth as in age, a man driven by elemental passions, and in this aspect of his character he was more closely akin to Beethoven than to Mozart.

In his youth, during the so-called *Sturm-und-Drang* period, when gifted young men felt themselves to be Titans and addressed each other as such, Goethe followed the fashion for a brief while. But just as great revolutionaries and generals, deeply imbued with a sense of their mission, hold aloof from their fellows even in their youth, so Goethe took this step when only in his middle twenties, for he recognized the danger of the Titans. At the time he was but one among half a dozen young geniuses. The fact that subsequently he alone rose to perfection and all the others were swallowed up by oblivion is entirely his own merit. No

other creative artist ever owed so much more to his own struggles than to his gifts. His rise was due only in part to grace, for the rest to his own responsibility ; he might be called typically Protestant ; for the rest, he had nothing to do with Christianity.

Goethe's belief in the dual impulses within every man grew into a lifelong dialogue between the two voices within himself—a dialogue he translated into his chief works. That is why his works never have one hero, but always two, a pair of contesting characters, both of whom prevail in their way. This duality is portrayed in the dialogue between God and Satan over Faust's soul.

Goethe had a deeper grasp of the characters of women than any other German. He lived in the analysis of emotion, while Schiller was motivated by ideas ; Goethe derived everything from nature and from experience, always guarding against metaphysics ; thus he studied the hearts of women too and presented them as he presented plants, animals, minerals. His analysis of erotic feelings is far more brilliant than is that of modern psychology.

As a poet, Goethe resolved his inner struggles by projecting them in his writings. He was like a mariner who time and again stubbornly steers past a well-known reef, thereby robbing it of its dangers. Thus Goethe came to grips with man's demoniac urges, giving them their rightful place in his system of the elements. The struggle within his heart became world-famous through the monologues of Faust and Faust's dialogues with Mephistopheles. It is this very drama of *Faust* that shows how Goethe acknowledged the struggle within the human breast, how he permitted no degree of idealism to seduce him into a facile victory of good over evil. The wager between God and Satan over Faust's soul—a wager which Goethe took over from the ancient legend—really remains unsettled ; only at the last moment by means of a trick on the part of the angels was it decided in favour of Faust. And Faust had the angels attest his right to grace : "Whoever strives and labours, him may we bring redemption."

To reach this degree of harmony in the end, Goethe had completed a pilgrimage of eighty years. But recently, passion had shaken him anew as in his youth. The aged Goethe resembles a volcano regarded as extinct that suddenly breaks into new eruption. That is why everything from Goethe's hand can be understood only by taking into account the date of its origin. All his work is a great diary.

Like Faust, Goethe sought to see the world from every side, driven by a curiosity of demoniac proportions. Thus, in his youth, he even had a



fling at action. In Goethe's life the conflict between thought and action which divides German history into two such unequal parts reached its climax. He undertook the greatest of all experiments, an effort to reconcile State and Mind. And here he failed completely.

It was a deed of the first order when the Duke of Weimar called to his court the young poet, suddenly risen to fame with the publication of *Werther*. Thus, a gifted young German prince recognized the genius in the commoner and poet, and under the impress of the new ideas on the eve of the Great Revolution resolved to strike out into new paths. This, and possibly the hope of reflecting credit upon his little domain and its people, were the Duke's motives. Goethe, who lived in symbols, did not care in what country he was to govern; he was in search of a stone to sculpture to his ideas. He was born the son of a Frankfort citizen who was not wealthy but gave his son a careful education. The revolutionary ideas of Herder, Klopstock and Lessing sounded in his ears, and his own wild youth drove him to inner anarchy; thus, by descent, environment and character hostile to all privilege, he must have naturally gravitated toward the ideal of the inalienable rights of the people.

A reformer by conviction, he threw himself into affairs of State when, at the age of twenty-seven, he suddenly advanced from the modest status of author and lawyer to the ministry of a miniature State. Since both the minister and his sovereign were young, and the Duke was far more anxious to enjoy life and women than power, everything began swimmingly. But soon there came a halt, for both came under the fire of the Junkers and of others who sought a share of power. A short time later even the Duke sided against his minister, since the latter sought to curb his friend's wastefulness and even to interfere with his boar hunts which devastated the fields of the peasants.

Naturally almost everything Goethe proposed by way of improvement remained without effect, for Goethe was not on an island but right in the middle of the German Reich, which was antisocially governed by three hundred princes. Disappointed by the business of government, he went into semi-retirement after a few years and began to try his hand at many activities that interested him. He drafted soldiers, edited magazines, directed a theatre, collected skulls and bones, organized a library and a museum, delivered lectures, composed pageants, and in every way sought to reassure himself as to the multiplicity of things; and all this he did in a little gossip-ridden town, hemmed in between the malicious intrigues of court officials and a handful of friends.

Thus Goethe sacrificed a decade—the rich decade from the middle

twenties to the middle thirties—in an attempt to realize his vision of governing in Germany by virtue of the spirit. To this end he became a diplomat, yielded on many points in order to advance on others, became Minister of Finance and Minister of War, took umbrage, wasted time, neglected his writing—yet at the same time he gained such a wealth of experience and vision that he was now able to compare and complement from the aspect of society what he was already learning and studying from nature. Serving the Duke of Weimar and occasionally prevailing, Goethe as a philosopher and author derived benefit from the adventure and gained insight into the structure of the State—insight he was later able to show in the second part of *Faust* and in many other places.

Much of what he predicted about social life in the nineteenth century is coming true now, in the middle of the twentieth century. It was all built upon freedom and internationalism. Goethe's internationalism began when he was twenty-four with this sentence: "A Frenchman is simply a man from head to foot, just like a German"; and ended when he was eighty with these words: "How could I, to whom only culture and barbarism are matters of importance, ever have hated the French? . . . National hatred will always be found strongest at the lowest level of culture. There is a stage where it disappears altogether, where one stands, as it were, above the nations, feeling the joys and sorrows of a neighbouring people as though they happened to oneself."

In his late thirties, when State, court and administrative duties threatened to get out of hand, Goethe fled to Italy, where for almost two years he recovered from society, and especially from Germany.

Goethe's disappointment in Germany was greater than that of any other thinker, because he had taken an active hand in guiding its destinies. No one ever passed more profound judgment on the German character than he. It is in the separation of the spirit from the State that we must seek the reasons why all German intellects and artists of eminence, reformers and revolutionaries, from Luther to Goethe, from Schiller to Nietzsche, judged their homeland with a bitterness so much greater than is found with other nations. None of them was permitted to take part in power—not even the smallest part in it; for the State was everywhere and always governed by the unintelligent class of princes and Junkers. Thus the German thinkers stood outside the great circus, looking through the chinks, their hands in their pockets; they derided the men inside who sought to master the beast with gun and lash.

We present here but a few of the many expressions by Goethe on the subject of Germany :

I have often felt a bitter pang at the thought of the German people, so estimable as individuals, so wretched in the whole. A comparison with other nations arouses painful feelings which I seek to overcome in every way ; and it is in science and art that I have found the wings to do so, for they belong to the world and before them the barriers of nationality vanish. Yet this is but poor consolation and cannot take the place of the proud consciousness of belonging to a great, strong and feared people. . . . Germany is as nothing, but every German is a great deal, though the Germans fancy the reverse to be true. Like the Jews, the Germans ought to be transplanted and dispersed, in order to bring out the best in them for the good of all nations. . . .

The Germans have a peculiar way of never being able to accept things as they are offered. If they are given the handle of the knife, they complain that it is not sharp; if they are given the blade, they shout that they are hurt. They have read so very, very much, and they lack a receptive mind for new forms. Not until they have become familiar with a thing do they become wise and good and truly gracious. . . .

The Germans have always had a way of knowing everything better than those whose trade it is, of knowing it better than those who have spent their lives on it. . . . I am afraid that they will go on misjudging themselves, treating each other with contempt, getting in each other's way, being too late, persecuting and harming each other. . . .

These sons of the North go to Italy, yet the best they can do is to have the bear rise on his hind legs ; if only he learns to dance passably, they think, everything will be all right. . . . From all indications it is a brazen tribe of men that lives in Berlin. Delicacy does not get very far with them ; you have to have hair on your teeth and the willingness to get a little rough at times, if you wish to hold your head above water. . . .

Goethe's views about Germany had matured by comparisons with other nations. He loved Italy, which necessarily had a symbolic effect upon him, in every sense. All his life he complained about the climate in Saxony, and in his memory even his native city of Frankfort was magically transformed into a paradise, because it was warmer, gayer, more fertile by a few degrees. As the years went by he turned more and more toward antiquity, and thus in Italy he found Greece as well, loving its nature and art, its fruit and men. At bottom Goethe did not learn much in Italy. A born poet of the kind that always anticipates the world, he had brought everything with him, merely finding it confirmed. Mignon who sings the sweetest songs about Italy and

Iphigenia, the demi-goddess of antiquity, were created before their poet had beheld the blue skies of which, as a true German, he had always dreamed. And sitting in the park of the Villa Borghese at Rome, in the shadow of southern cypress trees, he wrote the typically German "Witches' Sabbath" for *Faust*. Yet at home once more he mourned lost beauties for forty years and even said: "In a German face the hand of God is harder to read than in an Italian."

Goethe might have been speaking of women's faces. For seemingly it was from the features of the women of Rome that he brought back to Germany the model for his own beloved—whom he found in the charming girl he married after a love that had lasted twenty-five years. Goethe—unfairly called the idol of women, for he was jilted more often than he forsook them—preferred the southern type of woman. Almost all his women look as though they had been born on the Mediterranean; and all of them sprang from the middle class. The fable that Goethe turned into a courtier is refuted among other things by the fact that his wife was a poor flower girl and that his best friends were a man of the lower middle class and a mason. Among the women along Goethe's path but one belonged to the nobility—Frau von Stein, who for a long time wielded an important influence over him.

Because they lack simplicity, the Germans do not, in general, know very much about love; thus their history lacks the adornment found along the path of other nations—neither in their public nor in their cultural life have they those famous couples that enter into popular legend. Elizabeth and Essex, Shakespeare and the Lady of the Sonnets, the two Brownings, Louis XV and La Pompadour, de Musset and George Sand, Dante and Beatrice, Francesca and Paolo—these have no counterpart in the German chronicles. Even the ancient German sagas portray only the hatred of such women as Kriemhild and Brunhild. A few German princesses have left memoirs, a few mistresses anecdotes, but not a single woman, with the exception of Maria Theresa, has had any really decisive influence in German public affairs, and hardly one in German art. The only name that comes to mind is that of Beethoven's unknown beloved; neither the Baroness Vetsera nor Cosima Wagner were of German blood. Perhaps Mathilde Wesendonk too should be mentioned.

Goethe's life affords the only pair of lovers in all German history. His love for Lotte was poured into his portrait of her in *Werther*; and his affection for Frau von Stein was poured into their exchange of correspondence, a great document that has been handed down to the

Germans. They were two lonely Germans—Goethe and Frau von Stein—escaping from court affectations, from the pitfalls of government life, from the coldness and sparseness of the German countryside into dreams of the South and of antiquity ; seeking to forget at the same time the dull and brutal nature of their fellow-citizens in their surrender to Greek beauty, French spirit, Italian gaiety. In this relationship the woman with her self-denial was the spiritual leader, while the man, much younger, passionate and elemental, was the one who was led and was assuaged.

As for the extent to which Goethe himself was German—strangely enough he always remained somewhat remote from the Germans, without at the same time conquering the world like Shakespeare and Dante. The primary cause is that no more than twenty of the one hundred and fifty volumes of his works have ever been translated into any other language. Indeed, the French did not even render all of *Faust*, the national dramatic poem of Germany, into their own language until some ten years ago. Goethe, moreover, never was able to present to the world as many complete masterpieces as Shakespeare ; it was for the same reason that Leonardo's influence never extended as far as that of Raphael.

What is more remarkable, however, is that the Germans too know only those twenty volumes. Fewer of Goethe's characters than Schiller's have grown popular. Almost all Goethe's plays, like those of Schiller, are laid beyond the borders of Germany—in Italy, Spain, Greece, the Netherlands. In his youth he made the German knight, Götz von Berlichingen, the hero of a drama ; in later years he portrayed life in the German small town in the charming poem "Hermann and Dorothea," but by casting it into hexameters, completely unpalatable to the Germans, he precluded its popularity. The Germans never absorbed into their inner life the characters from the three great novels of Goethe ; nor did they absorb the poems, except those set to music ; and *Werther*, once an international vogue, is hardly read to-day. The single work that unites Goethe with his people is *Faust*, which is veritably on every tongue. In the form of verse, picture, music, drama, opera, book, this tragic love story has become part of the German people.

Yet it is not the love story itself that primarily moves the Germans. It is the wager into which their ancient, historical Doctor Faustus entered with the Devil ; for Goethe served up the legend in doggerel, after the fashion of the old German carnival plays. He used witches and spirits, devils and elves, weaving them all into the philosophical problem

which the German character recognizes as its own. The lingering doubt as to what may be done and what is forbidden, what may be acquired and what must be fought for—this doubt touches upon sentiments in the German heart as once had Luther's conversations, ranging from faith to doubt and humour. It is in *Faust* that the Germans see all their yearnings reflected.

Goethe, for his part, saw himself reflected in both the main characters. He was Faust as well as Mephistopheles—the one no whit less than the other—and for this very reason he retained what the Germans lack: complete inner security. For the Faustian problem—indeed, one may say Goethe's main problem, the subject of the first verses of the youth, and the last of the octogenarian—that problem is the quest for the moment of happiness. It is this Gothic, Nordic, German inability to surrender serenely to the moment, in the way that climate and character have vouchsafed to the people of the South, that led Goethe to renunciation. His hesitation in the face of passion, his fear of decisions, the escapes which governed his youth, his continuance of relationships that were half-dead, and, above all, the everlasting question he put to the moment of happiness—why did it not tarry?—all these are traits that are profoundly Nordic. From such renunciation Beethoven, at the end of his symphonies, always managed to find his way out into the radiant harmonies of his allegro movements; but Goethe did not follow this way of escape, because his fanatical love of truth was even greater than his will to create beauty.

Yet he did find a way out. He found it by perpetually placing shadow next to light, like Rembrandt; he found it in the cynical replies of Mephistopheles to the complaints and questions of Faust; he found it in the rivalry between the gods and the Titans which again pitted the South against the North, harmony against aspiration; he found it in his devout surrender to all the phenomena of Nature; he found it in his sixty years of unflagging activity, putting to work all the gifts for which he felt indebted to Nature.

The eternal question that keeps the German from enjoying life and destroys his harmony, this deeply felt insecurity in the German character that makes it either brutal or servile—in *Faust* it is raised to heroic proportions. This constant displeasure that finds no rest within itself Goethe was able to mitigate only by the expedient of work. The periods during which Goethe calmly enjoyed life were few. Virtually the only period of pure harmony was at the beginning of his sixties, when he wrote some of his most lucid verses in the *West-östlicher Divan*.

In this constant inner vibration and questioning, in this struggle between philosophy and the life of the senses which drove Luther into the monastery and out again, Goethe—the greatest mind produced by Germany—proved itself typically German.

We leave him in his fiftieth year. The German spirit is at its height. Goethe, Kant and Beethoven are listening as the bell tolls the start of a new century, the nineteenth. Others are listening—Schiller, Herder, Haydn, and of the younger men, Schubert, the Humboldts, Hölderlin, Schopenhauer, Hegel.

But a moment or two before, General Bonaparte had seized power in Paris. Now he girded himself to rise above Europe on the wings of the new ideas of France. If the German spirit now clung to its high aspirations, it might save Germany. If it surrendered once more to obedience, again learned to worship violence, then at best it must pay for external success with internal decline.

Europe was at stake.

## Book IV

# World-Citizens and Nationalists

From Beethoven to Bismarck

(1800-1890)

*"So lordly is the German patriot that he insists he can stand quite on his own. At the same time he arrogates to himself the achievements of every other nation, insisting that they are all descended from himself, or at the very least that they are his collateral relatives."*

—GOETHE

### 1

FOR SEVEN hundred years the ancient castle of Nassau had been standing on its hill overlooking the River Lahn, near the Rhine. The clan that had dwelt there, even in the time of the Hohenstaufen emperors, lacked high titles—they were mere barons—but they obeyed no one. *Reichsunmittelbar*—a curious word describing those who owed direct allegiance only to the German Reich—a whole series of clerical and secular princes, they had retained this privilege from the Middle Ages. Now they lay scattered throughout the great garden of the Reich like erratic rocks that could not be blasted away, impotent relics of an older era that were given a wide, awesome berth, since they had withstood all the storms.

The man who saw the turn of the nineteenth century from this castle resembled too one of Nature's rocks, and his name further fixed the affinity, for he was the Reichsfreiherr vom Stein (stone). Everything about him was rocklike—the stocky figure, the thick head, the domed



brow, the tremendous nose ; but if all these stood for strength and action, two narrow lips and two piercing blue eyes above them indicated sentiment and yearning. With this German, faith—the pure sense of the ideal—took the place of imagination, mellowing and softening his massive forcefulness, without, however, breaking their bearer's ponderousness. Had Luther been born an independent nobleman he would have retained Stein's magnificent momentum unbroken, without the necessity of bowing in obedience to the princes.

For, like Luther, Stein was a reformer—indeed, a revolutionary, a man without fear, in the highest sense. He proved to history that for once a German baron could be driven, because of a deep-felt understanding of the people, first to raise demands and then to take action, of a kind no German citizen up to that time had dared even approach outside the covers of a book. His demands, which embraced nothing less than the social reformation of Germany, were fulfilled but half-way and for a brief moment ; but his goal, the downfall of Napoleon, was achieved. For Stein did more than all the German and British generals to destroy the Emperor.

In pairs, four mighty towers stand at the portals of the century : Goethe and Stein at the entrance, Nietzsche and Bismarck at the exit. Let us, in the following exposition, keep our eyes fixed on these four great guardians.

The two bourgeois thinkers, Goethe and Nietzsche, who lighted up the century more than anyone else, belong to the world ; the two barons who guided the German century as statesmen, at first determined no more than the external form of their fatherland, Stein achieving the liberation, Bismarck the unification of Germany ; but these deeds had important consequences throughout Europe. In a curious parallel of dates, we find both Goethe and Stein looming at the threshold of the century in their full prime, growing greater and greater, until after one-third of the century both died at an advanced age, almost simultaneously. Nietzsche and Bismarck too reared their towers almost simultaneously, in the 'seventies, soaring higher and higher as their genius grew, until around 1890 both lost their leadership almost simultaneously, expiring just at the end of the century.

If anyone sought to present the struggle between the German spirit and the State in the form of a novel, requiring two pairs of heroes for the purpose, he could hardly invent them in a more plastic form. The two great thinkers were for ever clashing head on with the two statesmen.

All that happened under Goethe's eyes for the liberation of Germany, and all that happened half a century later under Nietzsche's eyes for the unification of Germany—the two thinkers reacted to it with doubt, criticism and concern ; yet both sets of events were necessary at the time—endure even to-day, and have been confirmed in principle by evolution. But even during the events, the two great thinkers foresaw grave consequences for the German spirit, because they knew the German character.

This time the nineteenth-century disharmony between spirit and State was not at all a case of revolutionary burghers fighting against foolish and wilful princes. On both occasions, in 1813 and in 1870, resolute noblemen were fighting to make Germany strong—and thus, indirectly, fighting for the German people—while the two lone spirits who watched them shook their heads in disapproval.

The allied German princes, beaten by the Revolution, whom we left at the Peace of Basle (1795), reduced in the end to bartering away pieces of the Reich to France—these princes in the first years of the new century continued to indulge their two passions : indolence and treachery. General Bonaparte who was, since November 1799, dictator by virtue of a *coup d'état*, had as so often happens in times of confusion cut through the chaos with the hand of a strong man—the hand, above all, of the best general of his time. He had won the victory at Marengo in 1800, pushing Austria out of Italy all the way to the Adige River ; and he had in other respects taken over the Bourbon ambition to weaken the old Hapsburg rival. We see how such dynastic rivalries gradually turn into national passions, for the ancient traditions of the French kings served to redouble the fervour of the Revolution. In every revolution the tinge of internationalism holds only for the initial stages ; with the years it changes back to the colour of nationalism.

When Bonaparte, then still First Consul, took in hand the establishment of order in Europe, he began with Germany, whither the imagination of the French was directed. At first he sought to win the friendship of the new Czar, Alexander I, who had risen to power upon his father's assassination, soon after Bonaparte's own seizure of power. With no one else did Bonaparte ever play so prolonged a game of cat and mouse as with this nervous, ambitious rival who was almost as unreliable as himself. Thus Paris and St. Petersburg determined in advance what the last Reichstag of Ratisbon, in 1803, was to decide in the end. The result was a new labyrinthine Reich organization, and, at the same time,

the death-rattle of the long expiring Holy Roman Empire. The princes, standing at the bier, mourned not. Instead, they vied for the favours of the young stranger who claimed the heritage by force of arms. In the end, Bonaparte revoked one hundred and twelve Reich suzerainties, redistributing their territory among the remaining princes, of whom there was still such a number that the map of western Germany looked as spotted as a Dalmatian hound.

One good feature was that at last almost all the clerical principalities ceased to exist, so that Germany too now consisted only of the secular sovereignties that had long made up all the rest of Europe, with the exception of Italy. The sum total of clerical principalities on the right bank of the Rhine that were engulfed in this process was as large as present-day Bavaria. Thus the Middle Ages in Germany came to an end three centuries later than anywhere else. What remained were fifty-three Catholic and seventy-seven Protestant principalities. Prussia got five times as much as it lost, for Bonaparte sought to weaken Austria decisively within the Reich; at the same time he endeavoured to establish an advance guard of vassal States in southern Germany—Bavaria, Württemberg, Baden.

All this had discordant consequences for the German spirit. It was a pity that all the German Reich cities save six lost their independence. But it was fortunate that the principles of the great Revolution—even the law codes, soon to follow—penetrated into western Germany. Had the conqueror held to this line, the best German heads need never have become embroiled in strife. All of them were then putting their faith in the influence of France; and Fichte predicted several years earlier that unless France were victorious, "soon no man who was ever known in his life to have conceived a free thought will find a resting-place in Germany."

When things took another turn, when the revolutionary General Bonaparte changed into the Emperor Napoleon, the "Legitimates" formed a league against him for a third time—Austria, Russia and Britain, this time. The new Emperor won a victory at Ulm, occupied Vienna and took the field against the army of the Czar, who went into battle precipitately and without the Prussians, helping Napoleon to gain his most famous victory, at Austerlitz in 1805. Emperor Francis made peace at Bratislava, losing Venice, key to the Adriatic, as well as the Tyrol and Trieste. Meanwhile the Hohenzollern ruler, just like his forefathers, betrayed his allies. The Count sent out by the new King of Prussia with orders to threaten Napoleon made a right-about turn, deserting the

defeated Czar to conclude an alliance with the Frenchman, calculated to injure his rival. In reward for their defection, the princes of Bavaria and Württemberg each received a royal crown from Napoleon in the peace settlement. Napoleon was master in Germany now and began to distribute crowns in his family. With many of the German sovereigns he enforced an obedience the German emperors had vainly sought to achieve for a thousand years.

In 1806 all these shifts were embraced in the Rhenish Confederation, organized by Napoleon after the earlier model and maintained by him for some eight years. The great beggars' procession to Paris was resumed—*saute qui peut!* France was jubilant. The dreams of Louis XIV and Richelieu were fulfilled! France was the protector of sixteen sovereigns, giving her more than eight million Germans to play off against the remaining millions of Germans. Germany's richest third was *de facto* French. The German Reich was dissolved—it had lasted exactly a thousand years. The last Emperor had no choice but to abdicate and re-establish himself as Emperor of Austria.

To this France, with her powerful army working in smooth harmony with her undefeated general, the King of Prussia had the audacity to send a menacing ultimatum demanding the withdrawal of troops from south Germany. He felt himself the successor to Frederic the Great, and he committed the typical blunder of the heir who believes that all is just as it was twenty years ago, when he or his father came into the heritage. He simply ignored the Revolution and its heir, since he could abide neither of them—and this even though Prussia had already been beaten by that same Revolution. To round out the impression of absurdity, the King placed at the helm the aged Duke of Brunswick, who would have been too old for such a thing even fourteen years earlier. Since there was no reply from Paris for a long time, the Berlin courtiers decided that Napoleon must be seriously considering fulfilling the demands.

But Napoleon was already in Thuringia when he sent his reply. Shortly afterwards he was victorious in the double battle at Jena and Auerstädt. This battle was fought by the Prussians with their front reversed, so that when it ended the victor was as close to the capital as the vanquished. There was no further resistance, and eleven days after the battle, in Sans Souci, Napoleon received the sabre of Frederic the Great—a relic that held considerable interest for him. Almost all the fortresses surrendered without striking a blow. The commandants, heirs to the

oldest Junker names and doubly bound to fight, outdid each other in cowardice. One of them, a certain Major von Benckendorff, ancestor of the later Field Marshal von Hindenburg, who handed over the fortress of Spandau to the enemy without a struggle, was sentenced to death for it and later pardoned. The King wrote humble letters to Napoleon and withdrew into the north-eastern corner of Prussia.

The Czar now concluded a disingenuous alliance with Prussia, perhaps for the sole purpose of seeing East Prussia laid waste as an obstacle to the French. At Preussisch-Eylau (1807) the allied troops gave a good account of themselves against Napoleon, only to be defeated later at Friedland. The Czar concluded a quick peace with Napoleon at Tilsit. The King of Prussia sought to conciliate the conqueror by the appearance of his beautiful queen, but the effort got no further than an exchange of pleasantries. In the Peace of Tilsit, Prussia lost half its possessions—all the territory to the west of the Elbe, its Polish loot from the second and third partitions, and in addition had to agree to the payment of an enormous sum of money. For the time being it received as a new neighbour a rapidly growing Duchy of Warsaw.

After a thousand years, a new order seemed to dawn in Europe. France stood on the Rhine and on the Po ; it was the friend of Russia. Britain, the conqueror's mightiest enemy, stood alone. It was a distribution of power not unlike that of 1940.

## 2

THE MAN who revolutionized the old Prussia was Napoleon. When he himself rued this blunder on St. Helena, saying that he should have pushed the Hohenzollerns off the throne, he was putting his finger not only on the earliest cause for his downfall but also on the reason why Prussia was able to rally. For one hundred and thirty years, to the death of Frederic the Great, Prussia had been counted the warrior core of the German people ; and as the warrior core of the same people it has again been counted on for one hundred and thirty years, down to the present day. After each of the only two great defeats Prussia suffered in two centuries of German hegemony, in 1806 and 1918, it behaved exactly in the same manner, proving the same character. On both occasions the warrior spirit of this people rose instinctively against the half-way disarmament by the French victor. Both times it secretly built up a new

armed force, and allied itself with Russia against France. Both times the movement sprang from a people thirsting for vengeance, feeling aggrieved and remembering its ancestors. Both times reluctant Governments—the first time a King, the second time the official Republic—had to be set in motion by illicit leaders.

And yet, even though every reader of this history will salute such manful resistance, since in it the will for freedom surges up, the development must be characterized as tragic. It was felt to be that by Goethe, and to-day the best German spirits in exile react no differently. "The Germans," said Nietzsche, "are stragglers who have put the great course of European culture out of step. Bismarck and Luther are examples. Even when Napoleon sought to convert Europe into a Society of States—the only man strong enough for the job—they spoiled everything with their Wars of Liberation, conjuring up the wretched spectre of nationalism with its trail of race conflict—and that in an old melting-pot like Europe." Even to-day—indeed, particularly to-day—after sixty years this sentence still holds good.

At that time too, when the natural impulse of every German was toward liberation, the spiritual leaders recognized the dual significance of the situation. As Germans, they wanted to be free; as citizens of the world, they welcomed the ideas of the great Revolution which, even in their distortion by Napoleon, seemed to hold out more hope for the future than the goosestep of Berlin and the black reaction of Vienna. If only, they cried out, the people's rights, long enjoyed by the nations of western Europe, could be won in the reconstruction now to begin! But they foresaw a great fraud upon the people after the liberation. Who would not have wavered in such a situation? Goethe was the only one always to maintain the balance of the sage, rising above national patriotism to the love of mankind. But it is precisely in their dilemma that the other German thinkers and creative writers arouse our sympathy.

The school to which nearly all of them belonged was called the Romantic School; but no one seems able to define exactly what German Romanticism means. Romanticism is by no means fully defined by being placed in opposition to logic, though that does give a hint of the difference between the German and the French character, and of the political confusion among the Germans. "A truly free and cultured man," wrote Friedrich Schlegel, a leader of the Romantics, "should be able to change his mood at will, from critical to poetic, from historical to rhetorical, from ancient to modern—arbitrarily, at any time and in any way, as an instrument is tuned." Here we see, not mere individualism,

but utter anarchy, and the more one senses its magic spell, the more dangerous does the influence of such hearts upon the life of the State appear. Indeed, here again are the two worlds—pluck and imagination—into which the German character generally splits, either oppressing with cold brutality the people at home and as many neighbours as possible to boot, or turning away from this life to dwell in heaven—but that too must be a private heaven, furnished solely in accordance with its dreams.

True, the German Romanticists felt compassion for their nation ; but since they failed to find it acceptable in their lifetime, they fled into the “ magic moonlit night ” of the German Middle Ages, preparing commentaries on the *Nibelungenlied*, collecting the loveliest German fairy tales, rediscovering Shakespeare in Germany, for the sake of his romance—in a translation such as no other nation can boast—or revelling in lyric song, to which Novalis and Eichendorff made immortal contributions. While changing, under pressure of enemy conquest, from citizens of the world into nationalist thinkers, many of them turned to Catholicism, as though to an international board of underwriters. Subtle and analytical of mind, they all sought to escape the trials and tribulations of all-too-conscious man, by attaining what they called “ conscious subconsciousness.”

Their happiness was for ever troubled by doubt as to whether they had not just missed the best—just how deeply is shown by an aphorism by Bettina von Arnim—it might almost be a motto for the Romantic School : “ The strawberries I plucked I have forgotten, but those I heeded not even to-day inflame my soul.” Here the heroic outburst of Faust has descended to the trembling fear of the frivolous Arnims and Tiecks. It is like having resource to a subtly compounded cocktail rather than a rich, aged wine—and thus the Romantics are more quickly and luxuriously intoxicated than Goethe. No wonder most of them look beautiful and mad—Novalis with his magnificent staring eyes ; Kleist with the face of a crazed child ; E. Th. A. Hoffmann with his huge owlsh eyes set in a mouse face ; Bettina, naïve liar that she was ; Arnim and Brentano, on the other hand, seem already to be posing for the etcher. In the Romanticists, the German lack of poise found its highly gifted poetic expression.

German Romanticism derived its influence not from influential works but rather from the level to which it lifted society—that is to say, the cultured German middle class of the period. The important thing was movement, not achievement ; values that endured and were all of one piece went against the Romantic grain. In their German, that is to say,

searching way, they distrusted form, believing that God and truth could be found only in movement. The aesthetics of this German creed were embodied earlier in the architecture of the Baroque, later in the music of Richard Wagner.

Fichte and Arndt worked actively on behalf of Prussia's liberation, the former as a thinker, the latter more as an agitator. Arndt (1769-1860) was born the son of Swedish peasants and had attained the position of history professor in his middle thirties. His works are engaging though of no great importance, but he left behind the picture of an upright and stalwart German. His uncompromising speeches and writings against Napoleon brought him years of voluntary and enforced exile in Sweden and Russia; later, reaction in his own country disciplined him for a third time, and not until he was past seventy was he rehabilitated. He was Baron vom Stein's best disciple; all his life he retained something of the preacher—the career for which he was originally intended; and his sullen, somewhat narrow-minded expression never quite seems to have lost its stiffness. But this obstinacy gave rise to an almost heroic tenacity—for the man had a real passion for Germany. His soul-struggles were not as varied as those of Luther, and thus his innate peasant pride was firmer than Luther's: "The soldier must feel that there was a Germany before there were kings and princes. The land and the people are immortal and endure for ever, while the lords and princes with their honours and their sins pass away." Such language was possible in Germany only after a great defeat.

Fichte, who did not live to the age of ninety but died at fifty-two (1762-1814), was Arndt's superior as a thinker. He seems to have evidenced less self-assurance in his relations with the world; indeed, he shows traces of a distrustful disposition and was not really a strong man. Yet he was pure in heart and guided by a devout love of the people. The son of a wretchedly poor Lusatian weaver, he was actually the first proletarian to enter the German political scene; for that reason he was a thoroughgoing Jacobin, an enemy of every kind of hereditary order. A disciple of Kant, whose shattered world he sought to rebuild, renaming the *Ding an sich*—the "Thing in Itself"—the "Ego," and returning to man his self-determination, he nevertheless actually became an opponent of Kant, and of Luther too. The kind of philosophy a man chooses, he said very simply and beautifully, depends on the kind of man he is. Such a philosophy, together with his own origin, led him to the radical political demand of equality in the American sense. While Kant had still sought to make a distinction between the rights of "citizens" and



"nationals," Fichte taught just how evil instincts habitually increase with a rise in the social scale.

All this the upper classes forgave him, for in his *Addresses to the German Nation* he inveighed against the common enemy, daring to thunder from his chair in the heart of Berlin not only against Napoleon but also against all the Germans who failed to take sides, which was meant to include Schiller and Goethe, among others. Fichte was the rare kind of German who, though coming from the bottom rank, feared no one, neither king nor genius.

Hegel (1770-1831), the most handsome among all the philosophers, is often called Fichte's successor; but he followed in Fichte's footsteps only in the field of metaphysics. He too, however, like Herder, saw an enduring process in the history of mankind—a steady ascent, despite many digressions; but the political conclusions he drew therefrom were quite new.

If Fichte, in his romantic way, loved Germany and liberty, Hegel loved neither men nor nations, but only logic and order; and in this cold clarity he is Kant's successor.

Though Hegel regarded the Prussian State as perfect, he was well aware that he was glorifying the ideal State rather than the one in which he lived and taught; yet the only new demands he made for his State based on law were trial by jury and public proceedings. Only a few men noted even then that this official Prussian with his pyramidal structure of the State was preparing nothing else but the deification of the State, which is the reason why a century after his work both Fascists and Communists rest their case on him, for different reasons but with equal emphasis. Because the Prussian Police State thought and felt along anti-social lines, it welcomed Hegel with open arms, as a witness who could prove to its subjects in the realm of the spirit what the kings claimed in the realm of power.

"Teutonic superiority over all other forms of civilization is firmly established, quite apart from its military power, which assures it of victory. That is true because it is an inherent part of the eternal world order." Thus wrote Fichte; and in his *Doctrine of the State* he said further: "No law and no right exists between States except the right of the stronger. A people metaphysically predestined has the moral right to complete its destiny with all the means of power and sagacity." If one adds to this Hegel's words that "War is eternal, and it is moral," one has the two most famous philosophers of their time as pacemakers of German world power.

At this phase of the German tragedy, the German God for the first time enters upon the scene. At this critical point, when the German spirit was in league with the German State, when there was proclaimed from the lecture halls of the greatest university not merely vengeance but world dominion as a moral and philosophical credo, the Teutonic claim to leadership, at least of Europe, is graven in golden letters over the portals of the nineteenth century. With such a tradition, why should not to-day's puny heirs of Hegel and Fichte jubilantly hail their Teutonic Führers?

What did these champions of German liberation really think of the Germans? Did they love the people for whose liberation they offered their lives? Since at a distance one generally thinks with greater clarity about one's own narrow sphere, it is useful for the German character to listen now to the comments these men made when they were far from home. Thus the most German of them all, Ernst Moritz Arndt, in his travel diary for 1799, makes the following comparisons, which might well describe the German "tourist" of 1940:

"The Italian sees only the Hercules adorning a palace yard; the German sees the dirt covering the pedestal. He desires to clear it away, in order to get himself into the mood to gaze upon beauty; the other is always ready for it. . . . The Germans, especially if they have money, are eager to be praised and exploited not only by people of standing but by every porter and lackey; and only a very few have the strength to stand on their own feet. They allow themselves to be served and waited on to the utmost, and set up a fearful howl when they must pay double and treble." When on a ship bound for Nice sailors and passengers approached a few soldiers who had been sentenced to the galley-ship, Arndt wrote: "The tone that prevailed was French, not the German stiffness that instantly stamps the other's station in life upon his brow, that at once lays in chains the mind of him who carries chains on his feet. The German can enjoy but one situation at a time, digging into it as a mouse eats its way into Dutch cheese. . . . Watch a German fencer face a Frenchman and you have the difference. The one stands firm like a bull and butts like a bull; the other plays and dances about so much that he seems to be dealing with a straw, but he hits his target."

Another German thinker, Friedrich Hebbel, reached similar conclusions on later travels. "Here in Paris the public is respected. Things are not as they are in Germany, where the soldiers are permitted to use

the butts of their rifles if words and curses are of no avail. . . . There was constant dancing—how it was possible I do not understand. In Germany each would have trod on the other's feet. There was little or no drinking—the buffet for seven thousand people would have barely sufficed to serve seventy in Hamburg. That is why everything here remains civilized—even the can-can—while over there everything degenerates into bestiality.”

## 3

THE FINEST fruit of the German spirit in this time was a pair of Prussian brothers who have no like in German history.

The Humboldts—Wilhelm, 1767–1835; Alexander, 1769–1859—were descended from Prussian commoners who had been officials in Pomerania for centuries—the family did not ascend to the nobility until 1738 and had not previously produced a single man of importance, not even a general. Finally, inherited poverty made one of these Junkers lift up his eyes to the widow of one of his colleagues, Colomb by maiden name, the daughter of a French *émigré* whose father had been forced to depart with the Huguenots from Burgundy, where the family had long owned glassworks. The drop of foreign blood was sufficient to vitalize the sluggish clan and produce two sons whose personalities and achievements pose the everlasting question as to whose was the finer. In truth it was the brothers as a pair in whom the Franco-German intermixture proved itself so miraculously.

Born near Berlin, they enjoyed a careful education after their father's untimely death; and in the highly cultured Jewish circle of the Herzes, Rachel Varnhagen and their friends they developed the luminous spirit and suave demeanour of their maternal heritage that was to lead them from the narrow confines of Prussianism into the bright light of the world. Originally the elder brother aspired to literature, the younger to research. A relief profile shows the youthful Wilhelm, features narrow and languishing, locks tied up high, the mouth fine but the chin weak, betraying wishfulness rather than energy. Alexander, on the other hand, with his curious eyes, shrewd look and resolute features, seemed to be far better suited to the world. Wilhelm seemed to be lost in himself, Alexander eager for the passing show.

And yet they were destined to move in quite different directions.

The poet became a statesman ; the man of the world became a scientist. This paradoxical turn of their careers constitutes their real charm. Here for once were two half-Germans who solved the problem of State and spirit in a special way, by distributing imagination and energy between themselves and their work in a new manner.

While they were still youths the two brothers were confronted by obstacles arising from their intrinsic natures. Alexander, weak and ailing in his youth, was at first obliged to retire more and more within himself, despite his aspirations ; Wilhelm, on the other hand, soon discovered that his endowments were nowhere near adequate to attain the force and depth of creative writing that hovered before his mind. Thus even in their early twenties the brothers found themselves almost or entirely out of key with themselves—Alexander tapping basalt along the Rhine and later engaged in research in England too ; Wilhelm in and near Jena, where he immersed himself completely in Schiller, later in Goethe, belonging to the intimate circle of both during their enmity and then during their friendship. Independent as they were, both young men went to Paris toward the turn of the century. Then their paths separated. Alexander found a companion in the Frenchman Bonpland ; Wilhelm became Prussia's representative in Rome. Worldly-wise Alexander succeeded in persuading the King of Spain, who owned half of South America, to issue him a letter of safe-conduct, and so went on his great journey of discovery with the Frenchman. Meanwhile in Rome Wilhelm studied the State in his capacity as ambassador, and antiquity in his capacity of poet. In the next five years each brother in his own way gained in inner firmness, yet it was only the scientist who brought to the world precious gifts.

Alexander von Humboldt has been called a second Columbus. It is not the six thousand plant species he brought back, the infinite wealth of observations, that make him unique ; it is the founding of a new way of looking at nature, supplanting that of the Aristotelian Middle Ages, with Goethe and Linnaeus the godfathers. What this almost solitary private German traveller began—the founding of a system of comparative description of the globe—was a reformation ; indeed, a revolution. Whatever science he touched thrived under his skilful hands, gaining new meaning—whether it was the study of the formation of the earth's crust, the cause of earthquakes, or the theory of climate. Sentience, perception, experience, guided his deeply felt faith in organic nature.

Later each of the two nations from whose blood he sprang claimed him for itself, and this rivalry revolving around Alexander Humboldt

is symbolic of his supernational stature. He wrote German and French equally well, not, like Frederic the Great, equally poorly ; and thus he was able to exert a broad influence with his teachings, the more so since the graphic force of his mind returned in his style. For as the discoverer of a thousand new details, Humboldt at once became the great popularizer of natural science and geography, and by virtue of that very fact a true benefactor of mankind. In his youth he had undergone training in the smelting industry, and later, on the basis of magnetic, geological and meteorological observations in foreign lands, had arrived at practical proposals ; and so the princes began to see in him a kind of sorcerer or alchemist. Even an Egyptian pasha and a Hindu potentate wooed his services. Later new plans almost brought him to Asia, for his own journeys only served to broaden his view, feeding his curiosity rather than gratifying it. In 1804 he spent two months in Washington, studying the new States of North America—he even wanted to write a history of America. Thus far Humboldt's spirit spread its wings.

Paris received the German as though he were the discoverer of a new world, which was all the more astonishing since he returned but a few weeks before Napoleon's imperial coronation—an event upon which Paris society was lavishing much glory and sensation. At the time, Humboldt met a bored young Creole, a millionaire and a dandy, parading his melancholy across the pleasures of the world. By means of stories from his fatherland, by exhibiting animals and plants from the homeland the Creole hardly knew, and finally by a single word, the German kindled a flame in this stranger. It was Simon Bolivar, whose decisive encounter with Humboldt we relate in another book.

While the thirty-five-year-old discoverer of nature drank in the triumphs that only Paris could grant, he felt himself entirely a Frenchman.

But a year later, when the brothers met in Rome, a fraternal symphony was sounded in a hundred intimate hours—born of antiquity and America, of art and nature, with many sallies into statesmanship ; Italy witnessed a chapter in the history of the German spirit in which the ancient dream of the South was wondrously fulfilled. Wilhelm dedicated touching verses to his returned brother, whose death had been reported ; and Alexander dedicated to Wilhelm *Views of Nature*, one of his finest books. Now that they began to be known as the "Heavenly Twins of Germany," they themselves began to feel that they were allied powers. Wilhelm, moreover, to whom antiquity was a precept for simplicity, soon saw himself drawn more into the light than was his nature. The King

called him to Berlin as Minister of Education. Under Napoleon's oppression, in 1810, he founded the University of Berlin, an undertaking in which only an idealist could have succeeded at the time; but when he called his brother thither, Alexander sent a refusal from Paris, though he had nothing to give up in Paris save his circle. To-day both brothers sit in marble before the garden gate of the University of Berlin, both with the expression of poets—and that is what they both were.

Like all spiritual leaders in Germany the two Humboldts too were bitter critics of their people. "In the great French world," wrote Alexander, "one is free of the petty-bourgeois nagging and fault-finding so prevalent in Berlin and Potsdam, where one spends months inanely gnawing at a distorted image created by one's own feeble imagination. . . . I lead a repulsive life here. The mood of the people is worse than a desert, worse than the tinny grey sky." And Wilhelm wrote to his wife: "Vienna surely is divine compared to Berlin. Just think of sand, of pine trees, of virtually no objects of art, and a great poverty of anything that is really amusing. . . . One has no conception of the cold dreariness, the absence of spirit that prevail here. . . . I should like to be off and bid this land farewell forever. It is and remains dreadful!"

And yet Wilhelm summarized the German problem in a wonderful phrase:

"The love of the Germans for Germany," he wrote, "is really different from that other nations feel for their fatherland. It is held together by something invisible. It is not merely a clinging to the soil; rather, it is a yearning for German spirit and sentiment that may be felt in, and transplanted to, any clime."

In the end there was a comic-opera reunion between the brothers, in Paris in 1814. The one marched in with the victorious anti-Napoleonic allies, visiting the other, who was half a Frenchman, in his quiet study. And one brother served as the other's guide in pointing out the statues in the Louvre that Napoleon had stolen from Rome.

It was not until they had reached old age—the decade between sixty and seventy—that both brothers resided in Berlin; they did not actually move in the same circles, for Alexander had become a royal favourite, while Wilhelm had lost favour with the King, but the two lived in the greatest harmony.

When Wilhelm died, his brother wrote: "I did not know that my old age held so many tears."

## 4

IN THE brief space of six years, from 1807 to 1813, Germany matured toward its liberation—after Napoleon had decisively defeated two parts of it, Prussia and Austria, and had made an ally of the third, in the form of the Rhenish Confederation. For even if we must look to Russia and Spain for some of the causes of Napoleon's downfall, the crucial factor was the rebuilding of the German Army. Actually, it was but a handful of resolute individuals who dared to rebuild the Army and the Government of Prussia, against every form of resistance and fearful reverses. Much more depended on Prussia's army, inured to war, than on Austria's troops.

Again, these men were not Prussians—and did not believe that drill and obedience were the only methods of reorganization. The six leading generals and statesmen came from other German regions, and thus their combined gifts made it possible to loosen up Prussian rigidity. An additional factor was that for the first time a few of the generals were of humble origin, and thus understood the common soldiers who had remained a closed book to the Junkers.

Among them there were Gneisenau, all iron discipline—the finest version of the Protestant general who serves his conscience and his king, and Scharnhorst, the thick-headed son of peasants from Lower Saxony, imaginative and with occasional romantic spells, who had been a prisoner in France and had been exchanged, surrendered by the enemy, as it were. Both men excelled in energy and cunning; for, as in the days of our own German Republic, they had to arm secretly and in violation of treaties.

Beside them there rose from the people an unknown who sought to harden the Germans by means of sports and gymnastics: the *Turnvater* Jahn. "The political doings of that curious stalwart, Jahn," wrote Treitschke, "began to exhibit some of the distorted features that marred the new Germany—coarse and arrogant hatred of aliens, insolent boasting, contempt for good manners and courtesy—a formless code that necessarily became all the more injurious to our youth, since the Teuton is inclined, as it is, to confuse coarseness with candour. It was a morbid symptom that the sons of this spiritual people worshipped a noisy barbarian as their teacher." The court historian of Prussia here anticipated the classic definition of the Nazis by half a century.

King Frederic William III, again according to the rule a thrifty, cautious Hohenzollern sandwiched in between two dissolute romantics, grasped at last that the Army had to be reformed to cope with Napoleon ; but he did not grasp that the people must be the basis of such a reform. He was no more disloyal than he had been taught to be by the traditions of his dynasty, and came off rather well in the difficult rôle of husband to a lovely and fascinating woman, Queen Louise. Nor may he actually have been as cowardly as he has often been called. What he lacked was passion ; in all likelihood he was incapable either of love or of hatred—emotions to which fate called him with equal vehemence.

But, to regenerate, without the aid of great generals, the Army that had almost dropped off to sleep since Frederic the Great, a reform of civil rights was needed, and this was opposed by the traditions of a three-hundred-year-old Police State.

The man who dared run headlong against the spirit of Old Prussia was Baron vom Stein (1757-1831)—the independent Reich baron with the blue eyes and thick nose whom we presented at the beginning as the true hero of this epoch. Indeed, Stein undertook to bring about from above the revolution that a liberty-loving people would have made from below. But since he was not a king, nor even a Prussian, he had to depend on the whims of a ruler whose family in all likelihood was younger than than that of the Steins. He reached the action phase only when the King was in dire straits—like a physician who is unable to persuade an obstinate patient to undergo a saving operation until the crisis itself has come. And did not the King have reason to tremble when a stranger came and dared shake at the two supports of his throne—the privileges of the Junkers and the enslavement of the peasants, the two groups that together composed the officers and soldiers of his Army ? What must the absolute monarch of Prussia have thought when he heard of this wrathful statement, uttered by the high-born gentleman : “ Fifteen million Germans are at the mercy of the whims of thirty-six petty despots. Let these autocrats not forget that the common people, by the grace of God, are free.”

Stein's hatred was turned against the Junkers, whom he knew thoroughly. He had grown up in the Rhineland and had long been a high administrative official. Through friends and visits he had come to know the arrogance and cowardice of Prussia's privileged lords ; and his affection for the oppressed peasants grew, because they appeared to him to be the foremost victims. Even before the disaster, when he was already fifty, he had set forth the reasons for the coming fall. The East Elbian



castles he called "dens of wild beasts of prey, laying waste everything far and wide. If they seek to retain the leadership of the State, they must give up their pretensions, their horses and their dogs."

And was the King to entrust affairs of State to such a man? The King much preferred the elegant, shallow Baron von Hardenberg who never offended him, because he simply permitted the system to continue. Yet in the emergency, after the first defeat, the King summoned the dangerous baron after all. There was an immediate quarrel between Stein and Hardenberg. Stein wrote down Daumier-like character sketches of the King's three favourites and sent them to the King in the hope that one or more of them might be dismissed. But the King grew furious and replied: "I see now that you are an obstinate, disobedient man who relies on his genius, who has no interest in the State, who is moved by whims and ruled by passions and by personal spite." With words such as these he soon ejected Stein from office.

But the man who shortly afterward backed Stein was none other than Napoleon—he did not know how greatly to his own undoing. Inaccurately informed of the friction between Hardenberg and Stein while in Tilsit, Napoleon advised the King to dismiss the former and recall the latter, for he anticipated that the constant strife between the two men was likely to weaken the Government of Prussia. Thus Napoleon, in Tilsit in 1807, at the height of his power, maker and breaker of kings, crusher of Prussia, apparently capable of undertaking anything, unwittingly opened the way for his mortal enemy—a way along which Napoleon himself was fated to come to his end. We need no ancient drama to recognize the work of preordained destiny.

At this moment, when the King, in a curt, cold letter, summoned Stein to sole leadership of the State six months after his dismissal in disgrace, the Baron lay on his sick-bed; yet he instantly dictated his acceptance, without demanding an apology or setting a single condition. During the months in his castle of Nassau, while he had been forced to listen idly to reports of the collapse, he had completely seen through the faulty structure of Prussia, writing down the methods that might lead to salvation. Equipped with full power for the first time, he hurled himself into affairs of State. He was in Memel at the time.

Stein had been able to reach Memel, easternmost point of Prussia, only by circuitous routes aboard ship, for the entire land was occupied by the French; and when soon afterwards Stein had to conduct negotiations in Berlin, he resembled a foreign ambassador in a French city. At the time no one knew just how much Prussia was supposed to pay to

France—as is the case to-day with the positions reversed. Then too enemy troops stood along the Elbe River to guarantee war reparations and hold a position against the potential enemy, Russia; then, too, the victor demanded fantastic sums. In the six years of oppression Prussia paid over a billion francs, though it had but four million inhabitants. Only in so desperate a situation could the miracle occur—a King of Prussia handing over his power to his Minister of the Interior, putting him in fact above the others, indeed, above himself and the Junkers. Thus for one year Baron vom Stein became the first dictator in Germany to be given power solely for the sake of his ability. The comic note of this experiment lay in the fact that it was the King rather than the people—and, beyond the King, Napoleon himself—who put this dictator of Prussia in power.

Stein acted at lightning speed. Literally in one week he recast the foundations of the State—he had, after all, been preparing for this moment for twenty years. It was not an upheaval as in Paris in 1789, for Stein was not a Jacobin. He sought everything *for* the people, but only partly *through* the people. One might perhaps better compare him to Count Mirabeau, another man who sought to save everything by large-scale concessions. But at this moment the German was more powerful than the Frenchman had ever been, for in Prussia there was no parliament, and the King had in fact renounced his power.

In a single day, by a single edict, Stein abolished peasant serfdom—the next day it was the whipping-post; and then the cabinet system of government. Next he mobilized the landed property of the Junkers, cut salaries in half, and introduced universal military service, including even the Junkers. After three hundred years he returned municipal administration to the cities, raising the self-assurance of the regimented citizens by this form of self-government. From these freely elected city councilmen he intended to progress to provincial diets, and then to a German Reichstag, proceeding by such education and election from restricted to ever-widening circles, in a fashion similar to the present-day Russian Soviets. Stein derived his ideal of aristocratic statesmanship coupled with self-government from Britain rather than from the French Revolution. By permitting the Junkers to engage in trade and commerce and the commoners and peasants to acquire noble estates, the caste system seemed instantly smashed.

But in the years to come the little men were to be disappointed, while the big men were to have every reason for satisfaction.

When the news from Spain seemed to indicate that Napoleon's position was growing shaky, Stein's nationalist plans grew apace. As early as 1808 he held that an uprising was possible, writing a private letter on the subject. This letter fell into the hands of the French and soon afterwards appeared in the Paris *Moniteur* as proof of the Prussian minister's guile. At the same time a decree by Napoleon outlawed him and confiscated his property. Stein fled across the snow-covered mountains of Silesia to Bohemia. His *émigré* period began with the sale of his silverware, finally leading him to Russia.

Czar Alexander at this stage hardly knew whether he was still Napoleon's friend; but Napoleon, like a sensitive husband, already sensed that the Czar was deceiving him, though for the time being only in his thoughts. Napoleon himself, after all, was pursuing a similar course. Alexander, descendant of Slav autocrats and thus himself still something of a barbarian, had been introduced to the world of Rousseau by a Swiss tutor, and his unstable character long vacillated between these two extremes—his nervous temperament shifting from enthusiasm to depression. His own country suffered severely from the Russian blockade against England, but Napoleon, in turn, aroused Alexander's ambition by hints about the Bosphorus, the Mediterranean, Finland, the Atlantic. These were years of utter uncertainty in Europe. The conqueror strove to reinforce his position through the lawful powers, while these aspired to peace through alliances with the conqueror.

Adventurers and patriots essayed isolated insurrections as forerunners of a national rising—finding in futile heroism death, and, at the same time, a place in history. Not a single nobleman arose in Germany to save his heritage, except the Prussian Junker Heinrich von Kleist, who at least raised his voice as a poet, writing the famous couplet:

Slay him; and the judgment of the world  
Shall not ask you why the bolt was hurled!

It was a commoner and a peasant who risked their lives, while in Vienna a parson's youthful son attempted to assassinate Napoleon.

The commoner was Major Schill, of Hungarian descent, who set out northward from Berlin with a body of resolute hussars, hoping for English aid. He was finally overwhelmed in Stralsund and then killed. When in the same year the Tyrolean peasant-innkeeper, Andreas Hofer, learned that the Austrian Emperor had concluded peace with the French anew, he and his friends were unwilling to believe it. They continued the war on their own—particularly against a Bavarian Minister allied

with France, but also on behalf of their Emperor and their faith. For a while the inaccessible Alpine valleys protected them and they were actually able to recapture their capital, Innsbruck, on several occasions ; but in the end they had to succumb, for the Vienna Government failed to help them. All three—Staps, the assassin, Schill and Hofer—paid with their lives. No people's war, as in Spain, was attempted in any part of Germany ; it is not in the German character to make a revolution for the sake of liberty.

At that time, Napoleon had become master of Germany for a third time. At first almost beaten at Aspern in 1809, he won the victory of Wagram some weeks later, whereupon, in the Peace of Schönbrunn, he pushed Austria back from the sea, taking additional districts away from it, but deciding at the same time to take an Imperial Princess as his wife. The Austrian statesman who partly suffered, partly contrived all this was Metternich (1773-1859).

## 5

TO COMPARE the spirit of Austria with that of Prussia, as represented in their men, one needs only to put Metternich by the side of Stein. As national protagonists they correspond to each other as did Maria Theresa and Frederic the Great—but only as such, and even then with the reservation that they were born neither on the Danube nor the Spree but in the West ; and that, as two Rhinelanders, quite independently and voluntarily but from profound instinct, they entered the service of the two countries and the two princes which accorded with their natures. Of these two, Metternich resembles a sparkling wine from the hills of the Moselle, whence he actually came, and Stein one of these earthy Rüdesheim wines that turn the drinker more and more serious.

Historically, Metternich is the more famous only because he ruled for half a century, while Stein ruled for but one year. Together they vanquished Napoleon ; but while the one employed his intellect on behalf of Europe, within the Concert of Europe, pursuing and at times actually realizing a European vision, the other's dreams were purely German. The one, utterly anti-social, felt and conducted himself as a great gentleman ; the other, deep in his heart, was a friend of the people. Metternich sought a Europe under the rule of an international aristocracy ;

Stein sought to entrust Germany to the responsibility of its tribes. The cynic believed in nothing except his own class ; the idealist believed in everything except his own class.

One needs only to look at the full-blown, handsome, sensuously delicate head of Metternich, a born lady's man, markedly shrewd but without firmness ; and then at the craggy, almost homely head of Stein, with its look of yearning—a leopard beside a lion. Both were clever, but Metternich was by far the more agile. That was the reason why he was able to hold his own against Napoleon in world-historical conversations—Stein would have been unable to exchange a single word. For half a century Metternich weathered storm after storm without effecting a single reform in the structure of the State, indeed, leading it backward. Stein felt impelled, within four weeks, to arouse a rigid feudal State ; and he would have accomplished far more, had not his own frankness barred his way to the instruments of power—for he believed in truth and liberty, words that were the butts of Metternich's jests.

Looking at them, one instantly sees that Stein, who put on no airs, was without the slightest vanity, while Metternich's vanity was boundless ; that the one never needed money and the other needed it always, Stein remaining independent all his life while Metternich, in return for his efforts, as a matter of course pocketed large fortunes offered by the princes and cities as gratuities.

When they were born not far from each other in the castles of their ancestors, their respective clans were old enough to lose themselves in the dim past of Charlemagne. The Metternichs, however, had but recently become *Reichsunmittelbar*, owing allegiance only to the Emperor. In both families ancestors, including the two fathers, had been high officials on the Rhine, and in all probability both had reared their sons in the same traditions. As young men both Metternich and Stein had been to England. But the outbreak of the great Revolution necessarily had a profound effect on Metternich, whom it struck at the age of sixteen, immediately threatening his own parental home, while Stein was at the time already a peer in his own right, a man in his thirties. This upheaval in his youth had a lasting effect on the unstable character of Metternich, who in England led the leisurely life of the lords, particularly with lovely ladies, while Stein, on the other hand, studied parliament and history. Thus the one applied the principles of oligarchy to his own country, while the other began to approach democracy. Metternich's Catholic descent added to his cosmopolitan temper, while Stein's Protestant origins made him feel more responsible for the individual.

Metternich received his political education in Viennese society, to whose most powerful statesman he was related by marriage, and then at the courts of Berlin and Dresden. As Austrian Ambassador in Paris from 1806 to 1809, he developed the fine art of intrigue to past mastery under the new forms of the Empire. But though the upstart adventurer necessarily revolted him and he was fond of mocking Napoleon's manners, he was far too shrewd not to sense the menace and genius of Napoleon and to ponder ways of liberation. He had the confident backing of his own Emperor, who since 1806 had styled himself Francis I of Austria. According to the testimony of Emperor Joseph, his uncle, Francis was "hypocritical and indifferent," though by nature too lazy to be truly disloyal. When the thick-headedness of such a chief is stoically accepted as is the weather, he is easily dealt with. The two men had become friends in early youth, and Metternich spent almost his entire life with Francis. He had much better luck than Stein had with his King, who was too weak to govern but too obstinate to allow anyone else to do so. Metternich took over the Government in 1809, after Austria's defeat, and one of his first successful undertakings was to present the Peace, which reduced Austria to a second-rank State, as the happy liberation of the people—through the medium of pageantry and manifestoes. At the same time he applied the ancient tactic of the Hapsburgs that for three hundred years had permitted them to lose their wars with impunity—marriage. It was not a simple matter to transplant a princess, born in the shade of an ancient family tree, into a new garden where grew naught but laurel. An additional consideration was that sixteen years earlier the last Hapsburg princess to occupy the same position had lost her head. The fact that Metternich, so soon after the war, was able to transform the two enemies into father-in-law and son-in-law—that fact alone proves his great talent.

Yet his thoughts at once ran on. While giving the Archduchess to Napoleon in marriage, he was already calculating how to retrieve her from this noose, working toward a new alliance with Prussia and Russia, though for some indefinite time in the future. He needed a few years for his alliances and for rearmament. Pink Marie Louise, with her fair tresses, had to fill out this time; and she proved efficient, for she bore the Emperor his much-desired son—the only thing in the world Napoleon could not do alone. Two years later his retreat from Russia gave the signal for all the oppressed peoples. It was at this time that Stein intervened anew in the destinies of Europe.

It was Stein who prevailed upon the Czar to turn the Russian victory

into a European victory. In his mind Stein saw the splendour of the ancient German emperors rise again. The upstart kings in the West, so he hoped, would quickly drop out of their nests, while the great Russian eagle would protect them all. Alexander, who but rarely lost his feeling for quality, had drawn this outlawed *émigré* to his court. There the taciturn man offered one of the two or three toasts of his long lifetime. When the news of Napoleon's retreat from Moscow reached St. Petersburg, Stein rose and said: "Often in my life have I thrown my luggage behind me. Let us drink. Because we must die, it is meet that we be brave." Eleven words that have the fine ring of Beethoven.

During these weeks the almost femininely sensitive Czar seems to have been won over substantially by Stein. Stein was in touch with certain Prussian officers, in order to bring about an alliance between Prussia and Russia at all costs, even over the head of the King if need be. Friendship between the two armies was of old standing, and a few resolute generals listened to the demands of the hour. Acting entirely on his own, General Yorck von Wartenburg, who was of Scots descent, in Tauroggen in 1812 concluded a pact of armed confraternity with the neighbouring Russian corps commander. No Prussian officer had ever dared anything like this before.

All this took place without the people being consulted in any way. The people were eager, but they remained mute; the King was reluctant, but he was urged on. Between the two, a few bold men like Yorck and Stein took action with irrevocable consequences, in order to bring the hesitant Hohenzollern, in March 1813, to the point where, from Breslau, he issued his "Proclamation to My People." It was at this time that the Order of the Iron Cross was founded. In this decoration the Prussian lack of imagination, so significantly expressed in the black-and-white Prussian flag, took on the form of nobility, for the Iron Cross represents drab duty rather than colourful glory.

At Leipzig, in October 1813, Napoleon was beaten by the allies and quickly driven out of the country. The elegant Prince Schwarzenberg is given credit for the victory. There was another figure, that of Field Marshal Blücher, who stemmed more deeply from the people and affected them more deeply, and whose fighting was better than his writing. Here, for once, was a German who was simple and brave, without being either brutal or servile.

During the Battle of the Nations at Leipzig, Saxon and Württemberg

regiments went over from one side to the other, from Napoleon to the allies. Through three wars their German princes had forced them to march on the side of an alien people against their German brethren, and to shoot them down. Now the men went over to them and shook hands. A liberty-loving people would have shot such princes dead on the spot. Had they not abused the lives, the honour, the natural affinities of their subjects, for purposes of an unnatural obligation, in order to become kings and grand dukes themselves? Had they not proved before all the world that Germany did not matter to them, that they were solely concerned with their power, their titles, their money? But neither now nor later did a single German tribe rise against these traitors. What happened in the Battle of Leipzig against alien rule was significant for German history; but what did not happen there was significant for the German character.

When the allies entered Paris, in March 1814, something incredible happened to that city. It had stood for more than a thousand years, and never yet had enemy rulers penetrated its walls. At the time the Parisians unjustly harked back to the feelings the Romans had entertained when the barbarians came for the first time. They themselves had, after all, sent enough coarse and savage warriors into the world, had themselves wrought enough havoc. But now, when the Russians marched across their squares, when Marshal Blücher with his bristling moustache and curved sabre marched ahead of the Prussians, the defeated French forgot that it was, after all, an adventurer from a wild island to whom they had so long entrusted themselves.

Since the Council of Constance, four centuries ago, Germany had witnessed no such brilliant assemblage as that of the Congress of Vienna. In a sense it was the very opposite to the sinister Paris Conference of 1919. The Congress, from which the King of Prussia had hoped to return within three months, lasted nine months. Emperor Francis, who was only in his forties, played the old gentleman and concealed his malice and peasant shrewdness behind Viennese dialect and humour.

The group around Chancellor Metternich included such spectacular figures as Prince Schwarzenberg, the elegant Hardenberg, another great gentleman, and Talleyrand, the cleverest of them all. Together with Wilhelm von Humboldt, Stein formed a group of entirely different character. Czar Alexander, who sought to charm everyone, had been since the assassination of his father generally of ecstatic restlessness, always the courtier and dancer, but also always the actor. The Tories



called him half Bonaparte, half a fool, and he obviously couched his passion to rule in romantic phrases; indeed, at times he seemed to be his own court jester. The King of Prussia, "who always looked anger and resentment," was pedantic, anxious and uncertain, and the mere fact that he always spoke in the infinitive made him a comic figure, provoking the laughter of the Viennese. At least three of these men, Metternich, Schwarzenberg and Alexander, regarded themselves each as the sole conqueror of Napoleon.

The struggles at the Congress of Vienna, in which the German people did not participate even indirectly, for there was as yet no such thing as public opinion—these struggles need not detain us here. The factor that in advance paralyzed the Congress as a source of German power was the participation of three major alien powers, just as had been the case in the Peace of Westphalia. Yet that participation was inevitable if Europe's house was to be set in order after the twenty-year earthquake.

But the tragedy in Vienna developed from the struggle between two philosophies of government—national States versus power groups. Neither as a European nor as an Austrian can Metternich be blamed for his determined opposition to the formation of national States, for he quite correctly foresaw a century of national struggle, in addition to the disintegration of the Hapsburg Empire. Both of these eventuated, though he succeeded in interposing a generation of peace and reaction. The solution of these problems, however, was possible only if the German princes of the Rhenish Confederation were left in possession of, or given back, their lands. That was why, after the Battle of Leipzig, Metternich proposed to Napoleon the restoration of France's natural borders by negotiation with his enemies. Not until the Emperor missed the right moment, hoping for new victories, did Metternich agree to the resumption of the westward advance that again led to Paris.

And yet the sympathies of posterity lie with Baron vom Stein, who was outraged by this solution. He sought to "hand over to their well-deserved punishment" all the German princes who had governed for six years and more by the grace of Napoleon, waging war against Germany by his side. Stein wished to see the German Reich rise anew as a people's Reich, for he loved popular liberty and overrated the maturity of the Germans. Indeed, Stein wanted a revolution from above for the second time, an empire controlled by the people in the British fashion—a conception that was even more modern than the Reich ultimately founded by the man who was born on an estate in Pomerania in that same year of 1815. Another proposal, emanating from Weimar,

contemplated, as did Bismarck fifty years later, making Prussia the imperial German power—Arndt and his friends would have preferred to see Emperor Francis resume his old dignity. Shortly before, Fichte had proclaimed: "Whoever has not taken part in this war cannot be incorporated into this nation by decree!" But the idealists remained alone and their voices found no echo.

Stein and the idea of a Reich succumbed in this struggle. The apostate Rhineland princes got back almost everything they had possessed under France's hegemony. And all once more pointed to the ancient conflict between Austria and Prussia. All this had its deeper reasons in the will of the German people, who did not at the time muster the spirit to fight for liberty. The applause of their eternally grateful subjects welcomed home the treacherous princes and continued them in power. "The great struggle," said Stein with bitterness, "will end like a farce if it leads only to a renewal of the strife between the Montagues and Capulets."

Metternich no longer wanted the Hapsburgs to have Alsace and Lorraine, which were on the auction stand, but instead the Danubian countries. Instead of moving westward, he wanted to march to the Black Sea. Prussia was enlarged on the Rhine and Moselle. Yet it was its geographic situation rather than its size that was decisive, for Prussia had now for the first time become France's neighbour over a broad front. The question of Germany's destiny fell into its hands. All the German princes turned to Austria, because they grew afraid of Prussia.

In this way, after the lapse of ten years, the German Reich was replaced by the German League (1815-1866). At the League Assembly (*Bundestag*) in Frankfort, henceforth thirty-nine co-equal princes were to be represented by their emissaries.

Thus the Congress of Vienna had consequences of European dimensions. Germans ceased fighting Germans. There was even achieved what Metternich called the Balance of Europe, and actually there were neither wars nor civil wars in Germany for half a century afterwards. A kind of Christian universe was founded, at first purely formally—a Holy Alliance in the Biblical style but in the form of a treaty in which the three victorious rulers joined "as members of one and the same Christian nation" whose true sovereign was God. It harked back to the shrouded throne that was set up for Christ once upon a time, during the Reformation. The kings vowed before the world that they would treat their subjects like their children. Later most of the princes joined the Holy Alliance, which to a certain extent represented a unified Europe.

But the Alliance was built on a foundation of absolute monarchy. It

ignored the Revolution. In Russia the masses still had another century to slumber, but in intellectual centres like Berlin and Vienna that was impossible. The Frankfort ambassadors were called the despots' hangmen against the people. And Lord Byron said that three fools wished to blend into one Napoleon in this triinity.

Yes, there was peace in Europe ; and soon after the conqueror had reappeared and again been defeated, that peace was made permanent. Only one thing had vanished from the continent—liberty.

## 6

WHILE THE son of the Mediterranean impotently frittered away his final years on his far-away isle in the Atlantic, his greatest Nordic counter-type was still to sit for many years to come in his room in Vienna, completing his mission. The sword of the Latin world-conqueror had cut deep into Germany's destiny ; the German genius stormed into the world in unarmed flight.

For among all contemporaries it was Beethoven alone who held the balance to Napoleon as a conqueror. Goethe was a sage, not a fighter. The kingly thoughts that then suffused the world, the sentiments of dominion, triumph, fame, that to-day, a hundred years later, still fill the minds of youth—they are inspired by the precept of Napoleon as by the work of Beethoven. No other figure of the nineteenth century radiates the fiery force of these two. To this day no creative spirit is capable of sweeping mettlesome men up into courage and devotion as are the final movements of Beethoven's symphonies.

After Napoleon's capture of Vienna, when Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, then new, was played in the city, an officer leaped to his feet at the beginning of the final movement, crying out : "*C'est l'Empereur !*" The profound significance of the incident reveals the underlying relationship. A thousand hearts have sensed it since. Why does it never occur to anyone to compare Napoleon with Mozart or Kant, to say nothing of Bach or Shakespeare ? And why did no other man of action, contemporary or past, inspire Beethoven to the point of dedicating a piece of work to him ?

Napoleon and Beethoven were born not far apart in years ; they resembled each other in stature—though Beethoven, judging from the

physical description left by his friends, seems to have been built more sturdily. Both lived through the Great Revolution at the same age. As youths both inhaled the breath of that neo-pagan world that resolutely resisted the Christian world, so far as mortality and fullness of life were concerned. "Yesterday," wrote young Beethoven, "their everlasting talk made me quite sad. To Hell with them! I shall have none of their morality. Strength—that is the morality of men who distinguish themselves above others; and it shall be mine." And again: "I shall reach into the jaws of destiny—it shall never bow me down." Or listen to him in a Promethean mood, roaring like Napoleon at a violinist who declared a certain passage to be unplayable: "Do you believe I think of your miserable fiddle when the spirit speaks within me?" These are but a few phrases, for Beethoven lived a solitary and creative life. But they are backed up by more than a hundred works. If we knew nothing about him, if the entire work of an unknown had come down to us, locked in a chest, with the wise men puzzling over the Titan—the kinship of the one genius with the other would stand out even more clearly.

True, one must not think of the Napoleon of State affairs and battle plans, but of youthful love letters, of a few army orders, of words on St. Helena; nor must one cite the sobbing adagios, the idylls of the Pastoral Symphony, or the Spring Sonata. Every comparison is like two intersecting circles that share but a segment; and this one too is limited to that segment in the character of the two men where struggle led to victory. Beethoven in a pensive or troubled mood bears no resemblance to Napoleon in similar mood. The one sent forth his sorrow in streams of eternal melody; the other stifled it in silence. Out in the world and among women, the Emperor is quite unlike the composer—Beethoven wooing and surrendering, Napoleon demanding and grasping. There must be a vast gulf between two men, one of whom sacrificed thousands, while the other spared the feelings of even a disloyal nephew.

But the fiery will to victory that time and again impelled Beethoven in the finales to his works guides us deep into his secret dreams and desires, revealing the kingly thoughts amid which he lived. Else why should he, who directed the forms of symphony and sonata into entirely new channels, have repeated again and again this ascent to victory, supplanting it by a closing lamentation only after his last collapse, in his own St. Helena? This creative spirit whom no tradition bound, who shaped his visions just as imperiously as the Emperor, was swept

above and beyond men by the same self-assurance that impelled the other.

It was the year 1803. The conqueror had already gouged huge pieces out of the bodies of Germany and Austria, defeating both armies in many battles. As a Rhinelander and a Viennese, Beethoven had suffered with all the rest. He was composing his Third Symphony at the time, and he wrote in pencil on the first page: "Written to Napoleon." And on the first manuscript copy he wrote two names:

"Bonaparte—Luigi da Beethoven."

The dedication is unique in Beethoven's work. Beethoven dedicated many pieces to princes who paid for first rights to new works or otherwise supported him, to friends who worshipped him or to women whom he worshipped—the first sonatas were dedicated to Haydn whose pupil he felt himself to be. In this way the wretched little King of Prussia actually got the Ninth Symphony. But Beethoven never dedicated a work to a great man from whom he had neither received nor sought to receive anything—not even to Goethe, whom he revered more profoundly than anyone else, nor even to the memory of Handel or Bach. Not at any time did he place his own name in large letters beside that of another. Here he did so in a full sense of equal greatness. One can almost see him in his narrow room, solemnly scribbling the two names. Why?

Because he conceived the work from Napoleon. Because in it all the alarums of war of recent years were spiritualized, and his genius already perceived in the then but rising adventurer him whom the world much later called "the Man of Destiny." The deep gulf between the Second and Third Symphonies conveys the impression less of the events than of the man who swept every creative mind of his time into hatred or deification. Indeed, it is Napoleon whom, in the resolute triad of the first movement, Beethoven sends out into the world to order its confusions; it is Napoleon whom, in the final movement, he grants victory and triumphal entry; and in between he places a heroic Funeral March, for he knows in advance the tragedy of great men. All this he sealed with a dedication, evidently intended to go into print—a dedication that could only harm him, never do him good; for the man whom he audibly celebrated as a victor in this startlingly novel work was the enemy of his fatherland and would plainly fight it again to-morrow. At a time when great French thinkers were attacking their own ruler, leaving their victorious country rather than do homage to him—at this very

time an alien, a German, paid obeisance to the conqueror. Chateaubriand too had recognized the marks of genius, yet he had turned away, even though it was not his people who had been beaten. Beethoven, one of the vanquished, turned toward the new hero.

And then, what an upheaval ! One year later—the manuscript still lying unprinted and unplayed among Beethoven's notes—Beethoven's pupil entered to report the latest news from Paris : Napoleon would soon crown himself emperor.

"What !" Beethoven cried out, according to the pupil's story—"He too is nothing but an ordinary man ? Now he too will trample upon the rights of man, indulge only his ambition ! He will put himself above all others, become a tyrant !" And so saying the passionate little magician went to the table where everything lay in confusion, seized the title-page of the Third Symphony, tore it in half and threw it to the floor.

If it had been news of a new victory over Beethoven's people by the conqueror ! But it was a less earthly piece of news. This was the moment at which Beethoven rose above Napoleon, because Beethoven loved liberty. He had listened to and captured the heroic movement of war that then still existed ; indeed, he had put it into radiant music, in this and many other pieces. True, he transmuted it.

When the agitation had passed, Beethoven rewrote the first page, gave it the name "*Symphonia Eroica*," and wrote underneath in Italian : "To Celebrate the Memory of a Great Man." On the other copy he erased the name of Napoleon. By way of comic relief, the heroic work was now dedicated to some Prince Lobkowitz, who purchased the rights to exclusive performance for a term of several years.

Five years later, when the Emperor was in Vienna for the second time as a conqueror, he was expected to attend a concert at which Beethoven's great piano concerto was to be performed, with Beethoven as the soloist. But for Napoleon's last-minute detainment, we should have a report of their encounter. Instead, in these same days, a high officer from headquarters, a music-lover, entered Beethoven's lodgings and invited him to Paris. All Beethoven had to do was to board the officer's travelling coach—there was plenty of room. Beethoven, who still could hear fairly well in those days, listened carefully and replied that he was affronted by the fact that the French tolerated an emperor. This he dared with the freedom of greatness, hovering above the nations on eagle pinions. But then Beethoven, agitated by curiosity, hesitated over the invitation, evidently following on its smiling reiteration. With an almost courtly finesse he asked :

"Shall I be expected to pay my respects to the Emperor?"

"Not unless you are requested," said the officer, who was eager to win him over at any price. But Beethoven again retorted:

"And do you believe I shall be requested?"

"Surely you know that the Emperor knows very little about music," replied the officer. Here the report ends. Beethoven remained in Vienna.

But the great upsurge that impelled his heart toward mankind he expressed not merely in a hundred wordless works that may be interpreted as one pleases, but directly on three occasions.

The only time he made up his mind to compose an opera his choice was typical of himself. "Texts like those of Mozart," he said, "I could never put to music; it must be something moral, uplifting." And so he chose "*Fidelio*," a paean to connubial love, but at the same time to liberty. Indeed, in highly modern fashion he brought political prisoners on to the stage, had them sing in chorus and culminated the work in the same fanfare of liberty with which he also concluded the Fifth Symphony at about this time. The trumpets at the end that announce the Governor to the rescue, just before the murder of the innocent prisoner—in our own days, when the powers-that-be are well advised to bar this opera, these notes could carry an oppressed people away into rebellion. Some day, somewhere, "*Fidelio*" will be played again to the peoples who have lost their liberty.

Later, in the "*Missa Solemnis*," Beethoven presented a new symbolic picture of his feelings about the world. It was not the ecclesiastic text that fascinated him. In twenty-four bars he disposed of the dogmas of the Third Article as rapidly as we have here disposed of the battles in German history. Finished twenty years after the "*Eroica*" and eight years after the end of the great wars, the work emerges with challenging war trumpets and martial music at the very place where it pleads with God for peace—*Dona nobis pacem*. And when the mass rises to immortality, when, at the word *omnipotentem*, the heavens are verily torn open, and finally in the Dionysiac *gloria*, all Christian ideas and values cease. And yet the work ends in transfiguration.

Yet in the final masterpiece, the Ninth Symphony, which Beethoven finished three years before his death, the revolutionary, the fighter, the victor emerges once more. The space of time from the Third to the Eighth Symphony embraces but eight years; but twelve years were to elapse until the completion of the Ninth, together with the plan for the Tenth—like our outermost planets, moving at great distances, remote

from the choir of the others. Schiller's "Ode to Joy" had stimulated Beethoven to composition even when he was a youth.

In this final movement, after the peaceful flood of lamentation from two imploring human beings, chaos breaks forth once more. The kettle-drums stir in anger, the heavens resound, the 'cello ventures forth with its challenge and the furious upsurge begins anew. But the world crisis has aroused the prisoners. Are they animals—are they slaves? How they rattle their chains! The instruments rise in revolution. They demand liberty. But light and night are still locked in struggle. It is as though the instruments were here seeking the tongue of man. A great colloquy ensues between the disenchanted, the prisoners aroused to freedom, defiant creatures revolting in vain! But from a magic distance, new thought seems to drift near on soft feet—and all at once they begin to take up the humming of the simple song. Once more a relapse into violence and perdition, and then, among the speech-gifted instruments caught in the spell, there rises a single voice, truly human.

Its first word is: "O Friends!" Its second, rebellion: "Not these tones!" Keep still, sinister powers, man's liberation dawns. Thousands already follow the new Promethean defiance; choirs of human voices are already drowning out the clangour of destiny. A fabulous procession tinkles near, studded with the tintinnabulation of triangles! "Hero, to Victory!" He achieves the unheard-of—the kettledrum, instrument of battle, herald of violent destiny, enters the service of mankind. The chorus is shaken into silence. Only the big basses speak their turbulent new tongue until, first men, and then women, to the sound of trumpets, in broad chords boldly demand the brotherhood of man: "Embrace, ye millions!" And now they follow, all of them, to rear their new world of brotherhood, praising the Lord on high above the firmament. And from the throng of thousands the voices of four men and women slowly disentangle themselves, repeating the Paean of Joy, rising and ebbing with it. But the crowd seeks to cry out—for a few seconds the women venture into the midst of the quartet. Then the great ecstasy sets in, brushed once more by gentle, sun-drenched pinions, until the orgiastic circles whirl in a frenzy of liberation and the barriers betwixt men and gods drop away in a great bacchanalia.

That was the conquest of Napoleon by his greater contemporary; that was the great gift German genius bestowed on mankind. Perhaps it will some day be the hymn of all nations.



## 7

MIDWAY between Napoleon and Beethoven stood Goethe, and he knew them both. Each of these two Germans grasped the depth in the work of the other. The few summer evenings in the Bohemian watering-place of Teplitz (1812) when Goethe visited Beethoven, twenty years his junior and even then almost deaf, listening in complete solitude to Beethoven's piano-playing "by flickering light"—these evenings are unique in German history. Never did two greater Germans come face to face. Before this combination, Luther and Charles V, Erasmus and Holbein, Goethe and Schiller recede into the background. Goethe, whose deep sense of music reveals itself in part in his impressions of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven, saw before him the man who appears in *Egmont* whose dream it was to put *Faust* to music. The stirring impressions each received from the personality of the other go to make one of the most endearing scenes of German life.

The Germans know very little of this encounter—no more than the critical remarks about it left by a neurotic woman. Nothing has contributed so much to the erroneous picture the Germans have of Goethe as the story of the encounter of the two men with the Austrian court, related by Bettina von Arnim. The story occurs nowhere except in a letter from this woman—a letter already invalidated by her other fictions.

In such rare moments as in this encounter spirit and humanity seem to blend into the German genius; we are disarmed and inclined to forget all that is evil. For though Goethe in part and Beethoven in his entirety are international property, though both of them have soared from the German coast above the sea of humanity, they invariably return to this northern homeland whence they took much that they embodied in their work and that does not readily reveal itself to a non-German listener.

This essential piece of Germany in the works of Goethe and Beethoven can be but remotely compared with the national element in Dante or Shakespeare. Neither there nor here can it be defined. If we keep firmly in mind that this national tinge is far weaker than the human content of their work, we may perhaps characterize it as typically German that, with Goethe as with Beethoven, reward and victory always come only after struggle and sorrow. What in the one is called

*espressivo* and in the other "constant aspiration" lifts both to fulfilment. But it is not a single system of spheres as with the Latin Dante who symbolized the world in his thoughts and his love in the structure of the world. Here it is a long battle, renewed in a hundred attempts.

But Goethe and Beethoven are set apart from the Nordic Shakespeare, who exhausts himself in a similar welter of struggle and destiny, by their passionate yearning for harmony. Their fanatical urge to circumvent tragedy, as revealed in the conclusions of almost all their works, fascinates men for the very reason that both almost invariably begin their work as Faustian characters.

The impact upon Goethe of Napoleon's appearance was the same as that upon Beethoven. True, Goethe tore up no dedication; he had written none. Inwardly he clung much more tenaciously to the Emperor than to the General who had subjugated not only his German fatherland but even his Saxon Duchy, which was kept from destruction only by a lucky chance, a whim. Indeed, Goethe clung to Napoleon though he himself on one occasion was in mortal danger at the hand of French soldiers, in his own house, and was saved only by his wife.

The encounter between the two men took place in Erfurt (1808). It had the same spiritual significance for both men and it was so understood even by Napoleon. To no other man did he utter words similar to those he addressed to Goethe, who, when silently appearing before him, elicited the outcry: "*Voilà un homme!*" The formulation and the course of the conversation show that Napoleon was speaking of the whole man. No such phenomenon had come to his notice among the Germans, nor even in Paris. True, Goethe at the time was at his fullest prime, while Napoleon himself, in so far as it was possible for him, enjoyed a certain peace of mind.

Goethe's bearing was far freer than Napoleon's own, and the conqueror, who knew men so well, sensed this fact immediately upon Goethe's entry, later finding it confirmed, between embarrassment and admiration, when Goethe contradicted him three times—something Napoleon probably had not experienced for ten years or more. Nor could this German be enticed to Paris, whither the Emperor himself invited him; and thus we are faced with the somewhat humorous fact that the two greatest Germans, both of them critics of their own homeland and admirers of Napoleon, each turned down flattering offers to go to Paris. These refusals magnificently reflect liberty and courage, outweighing a thousand German uncertainties.

Goethe held entirely aloof from the liberation movement in Germany ; indeed, he turned his back on it. "Is every movement an uprising?" he asked. "Does everyone rise who is merely routed out? . . . Keep rattling your chains—the man is too great for you!"

He endured with his usual passivity the period of foreign rule that invaded his own duchy ; and when matters stood particularly badly in Germany he turned to Chinese geology, later immersing himself in the world of the Arabian poets. At the time that Körner and Arndt were writing their songs of German liberation, Goethe indited songs of wine and love which, though clothed in Arab costumes, are perhaps among the finest German verse.

And yet it was humanity to which Goethe's and Beethoven's work ascended. It was on a note of liberty that both "*Fidelio*" and *Faust* concluded. As the nineteenth century began in Germany, under the spell of a conqueror, its two greatest sons, both as citizens of their country and as citizens of the world, stood aloof from the crowd.

And if in the course of that century, Germany moved farther and farther away from the light they shed, into the shadows of nationalism and regimentation, it was in defiance of the precept and spirit of Goethe and Beethoven.

## 8

SHADOWS ROSE immediately from the splendour of victory. All that Stein and through him the King of Prussia had promised his subjects if only they would come to the rescue of his country was distorted or completely repudiated by the King after the victory over Napoleon. But since these subjects were Germans, it did not enter their minds for some thirty years to rise up by their own strength against oppression and slavery. Peasants, commoners and students—without resistance they all suffered kings and great lords to break almost every promise with which they had been led into the war. In Paris all the privileges of the aristocracy had been abolished in that single August night ; but Prussia needed another two generations, and the grandchildren of the veterans of 1792 did not attain ultimate independence until the year 1867. The craftsmen were even worse off. The small shops in which there were twice as many masters as journeymen depressed their self-assurance, while they heard about the new free life that the English

workers were winning with the help of new machines. The mechanical loom, unknown in eastern Germany until 1850, brought English textiles to the Leipzig Fair, while the Silesian hand-weavers and the Saxon home-workers starved on their potatoes and chicory.

Along the Rhine, on the other hand, where the revolutions from France had already liberated the Third Estate, spinning-jennies had long been in use. Wherever the new movements had penetrated in southern Germany, the citizens, having won their freedom abroad as soldiers in the field, attained more liberty at home. Everywhere among the students who had returned as victors there rose the demand for political rights; and veterans of the irregular free corps in Jena founded a new kind of student fraternity, called *Burschenschaft*, which was followed by a large number of similar organizations. It was at this time that the black-red-and-gold flag was first contrived and waved. Since the lawful authorities refused to redeem their word, the demands that were raised could have been realized only by revolt; but there were no revolts.

The German League Assembly, instead, adopted a Rip Van Winkle attitude. It resembled our own League of Nations during its declining years, impotently talking about ideas. Whenever grave injustice was brought before it, it took the precaution of entrenching itself behind the strongest armies. It never even got so far as to provide for common German defence works or uniform armaments. Frankfort was called the "point of indifference" of German politics. The ambassadors of the princes at the League Assembly, pictured on the official engravings in elegant repose before the statues of Concord and Justice, were constantly trying to scratch each other's eyes out.

Under their leadership the reforms of Emperor Joseph were again discarded. The monasteries that had been closed were reopened; new ones were founded; concordats with the Pope were renewed, and after half a century the Jesuit Order was re-established. Even the old titles that seemed to have been packed away in a chest were unearthed once more; indeed, the ruler of Hesse-Cassel reintroduced the queue for his soldiers.

The Prussian Junkers, frightened at the breath of spring that had momentarily blown into their barracks, quickly slammed the iron gates. The King of Prussia had previously promised to call an elected popular representative body. Now he put in office as Minister of Police the most brutal prince he could find. Stein sulked in his castle and wrote to an intimate: "Prussia will perish without regrets or after-glory; and it will be regarded as fortunate when a power that once, by its ambition,

shook all Europe—that has fulfilled no obligation toward itself or toward the European League of States—when such a power ceases to exist.”

Three hundred years after Luther's burning of the Papal Bull, the *Burschenschaften* held a festival on the Wartburg, burning a few Hessian queues and corporals' clubs, and this was counted a fearsome revolution. A political assassination added fuel to the flames. Both events served Prince Metternich as a pretext, on the occasion of a conference in the elegant watering-place of Karlsbad (1819), for the issue of edicts of the kind that are to-day fashionable under dictatorships.

Now that it was a question of reaction, the Frankfort League Assembly suddenly came to life. Anyone who professed nationalist convictions was regarded as a conspirator; the press and the universities were watched; the finest German spirits were humiliated by having their homes searched or by being kicked out of office; and the poets were only permitted to sing the praises of liberty for the Poles and Greeks.

Here are two examples of censorship in Berlin. In 1828, when someone wrote that the Berlin *Intelligenz-Blatt* was nothing but an advertising medium, the censor decreed: “Since the *Intelligenz-Blatt* received its name in 1727 by royal order, this aspersion is impermissible.” In 1826 there was an Order-in-Council by the King to his Minister, directed against the *Vossische Zeitung*, which had “described the celebration in honour of the birthdays of Privy Councillor von Goethe and Professor Hegel, given by a local association, with an altogether disproportionate display of words and at such length as could not have been more exhaustive in announcing the festivities on the occasion of a monarch's ascension to the throne.” The order was signed Frederic William, with a flourish.

About the same time (July 1830) the French people once again took action against their royal dynasty, restored by foreign power. The Bourbons were chased from the throne and a relative of theirs, the Citizen King, was put in their place. The silk weavers of Lyon had revolted, at a time when the Silesian weavers were still silent—they were to remain silent for a long time to come. In England, shortly afterwards, the menacing attitude of the workers was sufficient to bring about important electoral reforms. Both these revolutions were made by workers, though the middle class turned them to its own advantage. Thus the struggle of Labour began in these years—it is just a hundred years old. In both these non-German nations the best minds were associated with the struggle, and Delacroix created his immortal painting of the July

Revolution. Again, Liberty surged through the world. Belgium tore itself free ; Poland rose ; in Spain and Italy popular movements were in the making.

In Germany alone all remained calm and various small uprisings were at once suppressed. The dictators in general governed. There was a strict prohibition against all political organizations, against the "Trees of Liberty," even against the black-red-and-gold banner. Members of the *Burschenschaften* were no longer permitted to become physicians or attorneys. Thirty-nine students were condemned to death, their sentences ultimately being commuted to thirty years' imprisonment. Professors who had proposed a Reich constitution were put in jail. Just one hundred years before the Nazis, the same system ruled in Germany, lacking only the hangmen.

Only once in this emergency did the dignity of the spirit rise—in the form of seven professors. Actually it was only a demonstration, and the majority of these men were not even famous. But they were men.

In 1837 the Hanoverian Victoria ascended the British throne as queen, leaving Hanover to an aged uncle who arbitrarily revoked the country's meagre young Constitution. Of this King the British press wrote at the time that he had committed every crime with the exception of suicide. And then, when new oaths were demanded of Hanoverian civil servants, seven Göttingen professors—Dahlmann, Gervinus, Ewald, Weber, Albrecht and two Grimms—declared themselves unable simply to exchange one oath for another, if they were to appear before their students as men. The savants were instantly dismissed and three of them had to leave the country in the course of three days.

It was Prussia that was really guilty, for the petty Hanoverian was the brother-in-law of the powerful King of Prussia, who sent this message : "It is not meet that subjects apply to the actions of the head of the State the limited measure of their intelligence." And yet the King was an ass while Grimm was a great man. All this was possible in Germany at a time when Frenchmen and Englishmen had long been governing themselves. Indeed, it was possible though half of Germany audibly applauded the "Göttingen Seven."

Since the national will dared not bestir itself actively, it sought an outlet in music and speech, and in typically German fashion political aspirations were expressed in song. It was at this time that the first

on the Rhine" and "*Deutschland über Alles.*" The former was set to music more than seventy times, the latter was taken from Haydn's Emperor Hymn and actually sounds much finer in string quartet than in mass chorus. The fact that among the "nations of poets" the two national anthems are so poorly versified is another symbol of the separation between State and spirit. The only nation that had never dared as yet to overthrow a despot or to shoot down a policeman—this nation, even in the century of the barricade, spent half its time in community singing.

During the eighteen-thirties there was an important attempt at unification. What neither contending princes nor impotent subjects had achieved, the practical sense of the German people brought about—that sense that had invented the art of printing and gunpowder. From the nineteenth century on the will for expansion, which in the Middle Ages had been no more than a romantic yearning for world power and an urge toward Italy, manifested itself in more realistic form, and in the twentieth century it outgrew all other impulses. It was no accident that the first railways on the Continent ran in Germany and that many of the great inventions in the field of communications were made by Germans. Just as in their best characters imagination and energy had always been blended, so they now found the best means to satisfy their curiosity and their desire to rule while at the same time amassing wealth. Steam power and electricity aroused the active sense of the Germans more quickly than that of the rest of Europe.

In 1835, when the first railway "raced," as it was then put, across the five miles from Nuremberg to Fürth in fifteen minutes, the German character entered into a new field of activity. Centuries of obedience and exactitude had prepared the soldierly German to become a precision worker. More than this, since he had always been oppressed and accustomed to bear his sorrow without indignation, he worked not only better but also for cheaper wages than others.

Here is the beginning of an evolution the tragic consequences of which we see in our own days in the high quality of German war material and at the same time in the readiness of the people to starve for years if so ordered.

This movement too emanated from capable burghers who rose in individual enterprise, as had the Hansa once upon a time. The Silesians Borsig and Friedlaender built railways and mined coal. The master smith Krupp made, in 1847, the first muzzle-loading gun, of cast steel, and twenty years later he already employed thousands of workers. This time too the princely Governments lagged behind such far-sighted

citizens. In Bavaria the Health Ministry raised its voice against the railway, insisting that the rapid motion threatened to cause serious brain disease among the passengers and even the onlookers. And the King of Prussia refused permission for a railway from Berlin to Potsdam, giving the masterly reason that there was not enough traffic.

It was in this century that the most important inventions were created by the German spirit—even though they did not yet materialize as inventions. As early as 1809 the Munich scientist Sömmering had used electric current to transmit signals. In 1833 the Göttingen scientists Gauss and Weber built the first needle telegraph, transmitting signals from their observatory to their laboratory. In 1842 Robert Mayer and Helmholtz independently discovered the law of the preservation of energy. In 1861 Philipp Reiss invented the telephone's precursor. In 1886 Heinrich Hertz's observations led toward the wave theory which is the basis for wireless telegraphy. But these things, which transformed the face of the outside world, in Germany hardly went beyond the stage of books, experimental laboratories, or small models. It took other nations, especially the Americans, to bring them down to practical use.

All this is deeply connected with the divisions in the life of a people where the classes, separated from the government, did not know each other, did not trust each other, and were accustomed to split into special groups. It was to take another century before the German scientist joined with the German business-man, whom he despised on account of his money, as the German business-man secretly despised the scientist on account of his knowledge. The same split that made Junkers and commoners unable to see each other at all on the great pyramid of the Prussian State also separated the men of the spirit and the men of practical life. When about 1895 a scientist for the first time sold a product he had invented—it happened to be Aspirin—to a chemical factory, he suffered moral persecution from his University of Breslau as a result.

Steam power and the machine led to the first unification in Germany. The Customs Union (1833) at last embraced thirty million Germans in one customs area, such as other great nations had long enjoyed. Coal and iron, buried in the German soil at three or four places, were shunted back and forth, and the South and East were industrialized as the West had long been. Prussia, which alone had a dozen enclaves, was able to reduce its sixty-seven customs tariffs. Price differentials rapidly decreased. Tolls were eliminated. Coins and measures began to be unified—all to the great annoyance of Britain and France who so long had cultivated Germany's disunity and who now feared the approach of German unity,



## 9

WITH GOETHE'S DEATH, the hegemony of German genius ended, returning to France. In the field of the fine arts the German genius had already been surpassed for three hundred years, and in poetry and philosophy too it now began to lag behind other nations whom it had actually led from Leibnitz to Hegel. Only German music remained at the top even in the nineteenth century, its level attained perhaps by but three foreign masters. In wondrous harmony the stars rose and descended, for Beethoven, Schubert, Weber and Hegel had all died before Goethe. Similarly the new spirits in Germany were born in quick succession—Schumann, Mendelssohn, Wagner, Bismarck, Marx.

All the poets and thinkers who emerged between 1830 and 1850—with the exception of the great Schopenhauer, who was timeless and a man without a country who might as well have been a Greek or a Briton—all of them were moved by politics and all of them were active in politics. There was Chamisso, a Frenchman but a Prussian officer, who produced the first poems of social interest. There was Freiligrath, who first expressed his revolutionary passion in wild dreams and later was the first to let one of the disinherited speak in verse—a machinist who likens his ship to society with himself sitting below. There was Herwegh, who wandered through Germany like a rhapsodist, was banished, returned and with his songs prepared the revolution. There was Grabbe, genial drunkard son of a penitentiary overseer, and Immermann, the aristocratic official, each in his own way an innovator with his plays and writings. There were Heine and Börne, both of whom had emigrated to Paris to vent their wit and displeasure, while at the same time furiously fighting each other. There was Count Platen, one of the two or three Germans who became poets though they were of the nobility—Platen who fled to Italy driven by his own hatred of German unfreedom and who there wrote the finest verse, almost all of it untranslated and otherwise inaccessible to the non-German.

None sang his way into the German hearts as did Heine—at bottom no more than half a dozen poems ever really find their way among the people. The fact that the "Lorelei," the most popular among all German poems, was written by a Jew, admits of important conclusions as to the great power of the soil and the slight power of the blood from which

a creative artist springs. At that the "Lorelei" is not by any means famous for its music—the pale melody of an unknown. A few verses here actually capture the water-nymph dream of the Germans, their magic fairy life, the seduction of innocence by mysterious women—and all this on the Rhine, whence German legend has always risen only to sink again to its bottom. So deep an immersion into the German soul was granted this German of Jewish-French character who in verse and prose represented that mixture of love and criticism of his country that has become generally known ! To show his presentiments of the present day, we cite the following passage from *Germany*, published in 1834 :

Christianity—and that is its finest merit—has to a certain extent softened the brutal Teutonic warrior spirit without being able to destroy it ; for some day, when the restraining talisman of the cross is broken, the savagery of the ancient warriors will rise up again with all its clangour—the insensate berserk fury of which the Nordic poets sing and speak so much. That talisman is rotten and the day will come when it will break down miserably. Then the ancient gods of stone will rise from the rubble of oblivion, rubbing the dust of thousands of years from their eyes, and Thor with his giant hammer will at last leap up to smash the Gothic cathedrals. . . . When you hear that rumbling and clashing, look out, you neighbours' children, you Frenchmen, and do not meddle in the affairs we shall carry on at home in Germany ! . . . And when some day you hear a crash such as has never been heard in the history of the world you will know that the German thunder has at last reached its goal. At this sound the eagles shall fall down dead from the air, and the lions in the farthest deserts of Africa will put their tails between their legs and slink away into their royal dens. A spectacle will be enacted in Germany against which the French Revolution will appear like a harmless idyll. . . . You have more to fear from a liberated Germany than from the entire Holy Alliance together with all the Croats and Cossacks. . . . You will see, once it enters our minds to take up with you, we will not lack valid reasons.

Heine did not actually take part in political life, for he preferred the aesthetic. His writings, like those of his friends in Germany, were not merely suppressed, they were actually damned in advance, before they were written ; that is why the militant spirit of the age sought to exhaust itself in non-political problems. When David Friedrich Strauss, in his book in 1835, declared that Jesus was a legend rather than a historical personage, there was an uproar as though a religious prophet or even the Antichrist himself had arisen. Feuerbach (1804-1872), one of the finest heads in the Germany gallery, went even further. He was the image of

what the Führers who to-day so devoutly believe in race would like to look like. He declared that everything divine was mere illusion, that the love of man rather than the love of God was the supreme law. Politically too he was a radical. Forced to live in a wretched village without a teaching position, he coined the phrase: "Without egotism thou hast no head, without communism no heart." Ludwig Büchner had an easier time disseminating similar thoughts among the masses. He declared that everything in nature was energy and matter, and with this materialist way of looking at nature he paved the way for an error and a simplification soon afterwards promulgated by Marx with his similar way of looking at history. Both of them, in their soulless one-sidedness, robbed nature and history of their wings. Whoever seeks to banish from nature what Goethe called God-nature or from history the influence of strong personalities, explaining both these phenomena in terms of economic and material figures, robs them of their breath and kills the enthusiasm of their historians.

At this time the meetings of the German historians were called the intellectual parliaments of the German people, and in their advanced circles spirit and research forgathered. The aged Baron vom Stein sought to forget his disappointments by embarking upon his broadly conceived collection of *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. Niebuhr, Ritter, Schliemann, great historians, geographers, archaeologists, carried the name of Germany out into the world. At the age of eighty, Ranke began a *History of the World*, the very enterprise creating amazement. Mommsen resumed the old pilgrimages to Rome and offered the Italians their history, by way of thanks on the part of the German people, as it were. At the same time, they were always writing against each other. There is not a single German historian of rank who has not been charged with forgery and ignorance by his countrymen of equal rank.

The production of German books and magazines—that is to say, the German intellect—has always risen when German State power declined, and vice versa. In 1805, under the pressure of Napoleon, 4,081 German books appeared—in 1813, the year of liberation, only 2,233. Later on, hand in hand with complete disintegration, intellectual life constantly intensified until in 1843 no less than 13,664 books were published. When the great victory and unification of Germany had come, by 1872, there was a decline to 11,177 books. But even then Germany held the world record in book production. It is in these figures and in the opus numbers of its composers and poets rather than in the battle dates that lies the glory of German history.

The intellectual level of the German princes during these developments is reflected in a sentence from the lips of the King of Hanover, quoted to a friend by Alexander von Humboldt in 1842. "The King," wrote Humboldt, "again said yesterday before forty people at the table: 'Professors, whores and dancing girls can be bought for money anywhere. They will go wherever they are offered a few pence more.'"

At the same time Friedrich List elaborated his new economic system and called the attention of his people to colonies. Thus a hundred years ago (1841), Bunsen, the Prussian ambassador in London, sought to acquire California, which was then still Mexican, for Germany. A widespread movement away from Germany took various forms. There was even an organization of German noblemen, founded for the purpose of turning Texas, then still independent, into a German settlement.

Meanwhile, throughout Europe, unrest among the disinherited classes increased. On one occasion this unrest broke out openly even in Germany. In 1844 the Silesian weavers rose in a planless, leaderless, pathetic hunger-rebellion. When the machine began to wipe out handicraft, there was no safety-valve, no Constitution as in Britain and France, to protect the exploited classes. Secret societies, forbidden bonds between Switzerland and France, prepared the way for the uprising. At the same time, it was the wandering journeyman who carried socialist ideas across the borders, when books were prohibited.

The man who rose rapidly to leadership was Karl Marx (1818-1883). He was the son of a Trèves attorney, and in Berlin he came under the influence of Hegel's philosophy. It was he who laid the basis for the debate against Hegel that continues to this day in Russia. It remains a new symbol of the German character that it took reactionary Germany to produce and hand over to other lands both the philosopher and the theoretician of Communism, Hegel and Marx. At the age of twenty-five Marx already had a deep grasp of the weaknesses of the Germans when he wrote: "The real pressure upon the Germans must be made even more oppressive by adding to it the awareness of pressure, humiliation even more humiliating by publicizing it. . . . In politics the Germans have only thought what others have put into practice. Germany is their theoretical conscience. The abstraction and arrogance of their thought has always kept pace with the one-sidedness of their reality. The Germans are so respectful of ideas that they do not dare realize them."

Marx was forced to resign as editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung* when only twenty-six. Banished from the country, he lived in Paris and Brussels, later for many years in England. Thus it was in London that

a German Jew from the Rhine wrote the work for the sake of which just one century after his birth his picture appeared at hundreds of places in Moscow.

At this point a fifth pair of friends rises from German history. Like Luther and Erasmus, like Hutton and Sickingen, like Goethe and Schiller, like the brothers Humboldt, so did Marx and Engels join in common action and mutual enthusiasm.

But in this case there was an astonishing fact. Of two highly talented authors, scientists and fighters, one was quite willing to retire into the background in favour of the other. For Engels was by no means a patron keeping a brilliant friend, as the Viennese counts kept the great composers. He was a scholar who refrained from relinquishing the income derived from his business only because he desired to maintain his friend and his friend's family. Engels was no apprentice carrying bricks for the master, but a friend who was able to write Marx's articles for the *New York Tribune* because he wrote with greater facility and, indeed, because he was the better writer. And all this amid incessant struggles within a party, with the partner to the friendship a highly irritable, often unbearable man who as a rule tolerated only yes-men about him. Even had Engels never given his friend a penny, his devotion would have been incomparable. It is the good fortune of the German character that it may count such a man among its sons.

Marx, on the other hand, proved his steadfastness in the direst emergencies of emigration, even when the very beds were seized from under his household. He declined a call to Berlin because he suspected that Bismarck was behind it. The courage with which he and his magnificent wife bore all their sufferings wavered but rarely—and all this for the sake of a creative activity that virtually never ceased for fifty years. The manner with which his leonine head commanded respect everywhere despite his stocky figure, the assurance with which his sharp voice barked out its incorruptible judgments—these brought him far greater authority than his books, which at the time were understood by but a few even from among his own circle.

Like Marx, Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) came from the Rhine, the son of a middle-class family. He too had enjoyed a carefree education, nor was it need that drove him to rebellion. A business man pursuing studies as a side-line, a disciple of Feuerbach and Hegel, he had seen the conditions of the workers in his father's factory in Manchester. He had at once given warning of the impending clash between the Third and Fourth Estates and seen Communism as the only solution. His contribu-

tion to his friend Marx was vision and experience of the same kind that Goethe, the seer, brought to Schiller, the thinker. In 1848, in the space of a few days, they drafted a programme together, and three years later in London they joined the Paris Communist League, substituting open propaganda for underground intrigue. In February 1848 they published the *Communist Manifesto* that even to-day is the guide for Communist dogma, or at least agitation.

About this same time the workers of Paris threw out their Citizen King and founded the Second Republic, while in London the first workers entered Parliament. The crisis in Europe was almost as great as it had been sixty years earlier. Again it was France that for the third time in fifty years carried the torch before the world. There were serious repercussions in Italy and Hungary, between Czechs and Germans in Bohemia, between Poles and Ruthenians in Galicia, between Magyars and Serbs in Hungary.

And now even the German people began to rise.

## 10

CROWN PRINCES, who so easily arouse hopes and then virtually always disappoint them, like lovers when they become husbands—such crown princes have been particularly popular in Germany where they have been traditionally oppressed by their reigning fathers and therefore led to think that they shared the fate of their subjects. Frederic William IV (1840-1858) seemed to be the particular embodiment of the dream royal, especially so far as women were concerned, because of his handsomeness, his charm, his wit and his irony. At the same time his advanced views of constitutional government pleased the best minds in the country. The time had come for marching forward and Europe was furnishing examples to the Germans. All that was needed to make them independent, under Prussian leadership, was a modern ruler in the most powerful German State. Despite a high-pitched voice, Frederic William was a brilliant orator, always conveying an impression of ecstasy when speaking in public. He was witty and fascinating, when in good humour; he was imaginative and well educated. But though he promised much he fulfilled little. He lost track of his own thoughts and he suffered from a kind of flight of ideas that constantly increased in the absence of any form of control.

In this ruler, who had to act on his own, the German blend of energy and romanticism that occasionally proves so strong was unfortunately compounded, heightening an innate sense of insecurity that ultimately led to insanity. The King knew his own weaknesses, for he had the German passion for self-analysis. He caricatured himself, thick-headed and bald—a sketch that stands midway between melancholy and cynicism.

In this man too the romantic urge of the Germans, so often combined with a desire for universal justice, aspired to the simultaneous realization of opposites : Prussia's might, and a united Germany ; despotism by the grace of God, and popular liberty ; all dished up and served together with a medieval sauce.

For several years this romantic King refused to redeem the pledge that his father had allowed to grow rusty for twenty-five years. Only a financial crisis drove him to call the semblance of a representative body in 1847, in order to obtain authorization for the public debt, for Rothschild refused to continue making loans without such a signature. The humour of Berlin called this assembly " Absolutism's House of Borrowing." But the men of the people had barely signed when a new whim of the King's sent them packing. The King rejected every draft for a constitution on the ground that " no piece of paper with writing on it shall interpose itself like a second Providence between our Lord in Heaven and this country." When opening his Parliament, he reminded its members that they were to " offer petitions, not represent opinions." These royal words really typify all German history.

Then came March of 1848. The people rose, the storm broke loose. Yes, this time the Germans literally rose.

Yet their demands did not correspond to the French example. This time, too, action was a century late in coming. While the Parisians did away with the entire bourgeois régime together with their Citizen King, it was precisely this bourgeois régime to which the Germans aspired. Now, in 1848, they pretended that it was 1789. It was as though a village out in the remote prairie was just beginning to burn gas at the very time when the other cities were turning to electric light. Apart from a few moments in southern Germany, the republic was nowhere demanded by the masses, only by some individual ideologists. On the contrary, the princes were at first requested, by means of more or less polite petitions and protests, to release the property of the peasants, to liberate the press, and to grant the citizens participation in affairs of State. Leaflets and speeches in the beginning were couched in harmless phraseology.

They pointed out that the President of the United States received a less sum in salary than many a prince spent on a single pleasure jaunt ; or the luxurious mourning of a courtier was compared with the sorrowful habiliments of a weaver.

Was it really three hundred years since the ancestors of the same peasants in Baden and Swabia had raised almost the same demands ? Now they ransacked a few estates and burned the records of debts, toasting their kings and grand dukes at the same time. Nowhere was there bloodshed. The rulers sent for liberal ministers. Even the lords of the League Assembly took fright, quickly revoked censorship and flew the flag they had prohibited. Perhaps they had preserved it in some closet, against just such an emergency.

What had been wafted into Germany from Paris was a spring breeze rather than a storm. There was general surprise when Herwegh announced his intention of mustering eight hundred *émigrés* as soldiers in France and coming over to join in the fighting. Liebknecht, then twenty-two, took part, but Marx, who like Liebknecht had come to Paris to witness the revolution, laughed off this romantic German nonsense.

Events took a more stormy course in Vienna, where the pressure had been much greater. The crowds demanded the resignation of seventy-five-year-old Metternich, who, during the last twelve years as minister to a feeble-minded monarch, had been an absolute dictator. But at the same time, here too the Hapsburgs were applauded and no one called for a republic. While street fights raged between the Imperial troops and the National Guard that was just in the process of formation, the trembling archdukes gathered around their aged chancellor and implored him to resign as quickly as possible. After ruling for almost forty years, Metternich fled to London with his young third wife, on borrowed money and name, and by devious routes.

The Hapsburgs, who had fled to Innsbruck, were soon afterwards prevailed upon to return. The feeble-minded Emperor was deposed and in the following autumn replaced by his nephew, young Francis Joseph. Neither in Vienna nor in other capitals did the Junkers and nobles rise to protect the princes from whom they had for centuries derived their privileges.

Ludwig I of Bavaria (1825-1848) had begun as a liberal, enforcing a very limited constitution that had been adopted before, though it had never been properly executed. All the architectural landmarks that earned modern Munich the name of "Germany's Florence" were built by him. He was patron to painters, poets and musicians and had a



collection of portraits of the most beautiful women of his time assembled, an achievement in return for which one gladly overlooks his own verses. His great ambition was to be received into the circle of eminent scholars as one of themselves, and it was for this reason that he raised Munich to the status of a university city. After the July Revolution he allowed himself to be stampeded, and under ecclesiastical influence made concessions to the Jesuits, turned more reactionary, and suppressed the freedom of the press.

It was at this point that there appeared for the first time in German history a woman who gained influence in the rôle of mistress. Lola Montez, half Irish, half Spanish, grown up in British India, more an adventuress than a dancer, came to Munich on her world travels. Ludwig, nearing fifty, fell in love with her. Lola attempted to revive his interest in liberal ideas, for she saw that he really wished to do better than he did. All the young people were enchanted with her. But when her political influence grew dangerous, the wind turned. Ministers picked her to pieces, clerics undermined her position, and solid citizens complained that Ludwig's huge expenditures for art and science were a senseless luxury for which his friends were responsible! It was not wastefulness in his own private life with which the citizens reproached their King, but with his public lavishness on behalf of beauty and intellect. When Ludwig sought to make Lola Montez a Bavarian citizen and a countess, the minister in question objected. He was dismissed together with the whole cabinet. The King forced through the ennoblement of his friend.

But these events coincided with the revolution of 1848. Under pressure of the impending revolt, Ludwig separated from Lola, no longer daring to see her, though he stood unnoticed in civilian clothes on the pavement opposite her house in the Briennerstrasse while a crowd mocked her and stoned her windows until she quickly fled in her carriage.

The King thought he had saved his throne at the expense of this sacrifice; but a few days later he was forced to abdicate. He was followed to the throne by Ludwig II, who, in the eyes of his solid citizens, far outdid his predecessor in caprice and likewise had to be deposed. But this time no woman was involved.

Two things were new to German history in this affair—a woman in politics and the dethronement of a king. When bourgeois ministers for the first time refused to obey a command, it was on account of a brilliant woman, and not because she robbed the exchequer of millions for her furs, but because she sought to bring freedom to the country.

Ludwig, the most liberal among the German princes, fell because he was too tolerant.

The German character manifested itself most plainly in the revolution in Berlin, which followed the Vienna uprising by a few days.

Just four hundred years after the Margrave of Hohenzollern had forced the Brandenburgers to swear him fealty, they rose for the first time to present a set of demands to his scion. But the Berliners were quite willing to retain their ruler, as had been the people of Vienna and Stuttgart; indeed, both for city and country they wanted the Prussian order to which they were used.

When on March 18, 1848—it happened to be a warm Saturday—a royal decree promised the desired Constitution, many thousands gathered before the palace to thank their good King. But then suddenly those first two shots rang out whose origin remains a mystery in all uprisings. The crowd, barely armed up to this moment, grew incensed. All the people now streamed out into the streets, and within two hours two hundred barricades were built; but the armed troops were victorious and there were more than a hundred dead.

And where were the Prussian Junkers? Did they not lead the troops to protect the King? . . . They remained invisible.

The King, victorious, so to speak, was pusillanimous by nature and lacked nerve. In his mind he saw his former fellow-monarchs of England and France—saw the fate they had suffered on the block. He issued orders for his troops to withdraw—an order they carried out in exemplary fashion, though the crowds stoned and derided them. In a proclamation "To My Dear Berliners" the King promised the people fulfilment of all their demands. In complete perplexity he stood in his palace listening to everyone, authorizing a militia, proclaiming an amnesty, forming a new cabinet.

The King neither yielded from love for his subjects, nor did he act from revolutionary passion. In Prussia neither of the two parties won. What won was Order. The people loaded their dead on carts and paraded them past the palace, but the King's own Lord Chamberlain furnished the laurel and the flowers for the corpses. The trembling royal couple were prevailed upon to step out on a balcony, and someone called out: "Hat off!" It was in this moment that the King of Prussia saluted his people—those that were dead. The moment is unique in German history. The crowd was glad that it was not compelled to engage in disorder. In Paris the "Marseillaise" had been struck up; but in Berlin, before the palace, the crowd broke out into the hymn

"Jesus, Shepherd of my Soul"—a song in which the King could join. Afterwards the militia paid its respects to the King, in order to protect him. It requested him to recall the troops as soon as possible.

On March 21st the King undertook a dramatic procession through the city, proclaiming the mysterious decision: "Henceforth Prussia shall dissolve into Germany." There was universal hope that the new Prussian Constitution would result in a new unification of Germany. Radical hearts swelled with hopes of a League of Nations, and a proclamation to a Berlin meeting was headed by the following sentence in three languages: "Long live the European Revolution! Long live the new world!"

Between so weak a king and so patient a people no revolution could evolve.

## 11

GERMANY was to become a people's realm, a union no longer held together in a League Assembly by the emissaries of the princes, but in a Reichstag elected by the German people. This was the problem that was posed in May 1848, two months after the events in Berlin and Vienna, to the National Assembly in Frankfort, when it was opened to the firing of cannon and the tolling of bells. It was the first representative body that had united the German people in their two-thousand-year-old history. The German people were of age.

The Church of St. Paul, scene of this assembly, encloses a round domed hall carried by noble columns, in the manner of the Roman Pantheon. It lies in an altogether different neighbourhood than the palace where the League Assembly had held its sessions; but now the new flag fluttered from the two hostile structures. There was but a tiny minority in the rotunda that aspired to a republic. The majority of the deputies was of monarchist inclination. Yet the two assemblies were distinguished by the fact that the old League Assembly was almost exclusively composed of gentlemen of the nobility, while the new National Assembly was the centre of the bourgeois spirit—scholars, writers, high officials—an assemblage too great in quality to be merely labelled splendid. Here there were thinkers, over there in the old palace courtiers; here there were high foreheads, there gold-braided court attire. The first-draft Constitution, presented by the historian Dahlmann,

provided for a hereditary Empire, responsible Reich ministers, a Reichstag with an upper and a lower chamber, and universal suffrage.

The draft at once met with universal opposition. Austria objected, because within a unified Germany it would have fallen apart, with all its alien peoples; Prussia because the romantic King did not wish to be at the head; the intermediate States from jealousy. Thus the Assembly was compelled to appoint a provisional Reich Administrator. Whom would it choose? One of its thinkers? A seasoned liberal jurist? A militant cleric? All of them could have been found in the domed rotunda; yet whom did the free German people, heretofore ruled by kings, put at their head as their first elected ruler? An Austrian archduke! He was the "Hindenburg" of 1848. For when Germans suddenly find themselves free to move and make up their minds as they wish, they grow frightened, like well-brought-up children who suddenly, on a walk, find themselves without a teacher and hasten back to school as quickly as possible in their perplexity.

Nor did the first storm raised in this popular assembly deal with the question of domestic liberty for which it had been called. It dealt with the land of Schleswig, around which a long struggle had raged with the Danes. An armistice concluded at the time by the King of Prussia with the King of Denmark aroused the majority in Frankfort. There were popular riots as well, and the military intervened, with the result that two high-born officers fell. The moral harm was great, though no more patriotic motive could have been imagined.

At the same time riots in Hungary had led to the dispatch of troops from Vienna. This action infuriated Vienna liberals, who halted the troops at the railway station. A second revolution broke out in October, and the troops loyal to the Emperor were victorious. One of the great figures of Frankfort, who had hurried to the scene in order to mediate, Robert Blum, became the subject of a gross breach of his immunity as a deputy and was convicted and shot. It was the first shot fired by the reactionary forces.

In Vienna, Prince Schwarzenberg had the parliament building locked up by a custodian, pocketing the key himself. It was the curtest formula of force that ever met with success in history.

In Berlin, troops with drums and fifes entered the city the day after the shooting of Blum in order to disperse the new Prussian Diet. Old General Wrangel, who looked like a museum piece from the time of Frederic the Great, had marched on Berlin with 15,000 men, more or less on his own initiative. The Militia seriously considered taking up

arms against him. When its commander entered the Diet session with an urgent request for a quick decision, since Wrangel was already advancing against the five gates of Berlin, a committee of five deliberated. It was the moment in which every revolution has to defend itself against the old powers. The vote was three against fighting to two in favour. Wrangel was greeted by the citizens with flowers. A state of siege was declared, the Militia was dissolved, and the Diet was moved to the provinces, where it was dissolved. A new Constitution was imposed by the King—a Constitution including the Three-Class Franchise that was neither equal nor secret. This was the end of democracy in Berlin and Vienna, after seven months.

Prussian troops were useful, whenever a country was menaced by liberty. They were soon borrowed to help restore the King of Saxony, dethroned by a new uprising. At the time, in May 1849, it was the architect Semper who built the barricades in Dresden, while Richard Wagner looked on with enthusiasm. In Stuttgart the struggles around the Constitution led to the old question as to whether there should be one or two chambers of the legislative body. The decision, so Justinus Kerner reports, depended upon whether the architectural plan had room for two halls or only one. But then the Prussian avengers appeared on the scene. In Karlsruhe, where the popular assembly had appointed three dictators, two Prussian Army corps marched in, under the leadership of Prince William, long since returned, to restore order, that is to say, submission. It was in these days that Karl Schurz escaped from Rastatt and later liberated the imprisoned poet Kinkel. Hecker, the liberal who had returned from the United States to do his part, had to escape once more. The Grand Duke of Baden, who had fled, returned to receive the plaudits of the citizens of Baden. Eleven thousand radicals, burghers and workers, had to flee to France and Switzerland.

The German dream of unity was buried in the same grave as liberty. Those left wanted union between Germany and Austria, the *Anschluss*. Others insisted on a so-called Lesser Germany, excluding polyglot Austria with which, however, they wanted an alliance—the very solution that Bismarck adopted two decades later.

In the moral sphere two powers still faced each other—the armed individual States and the unarmed National Assembly in Frankfurt. The situation was quite similar to that in our own days when the major powers stood aloof from the League of Nations, while belonging to it. At this time the prestige of the National Assembly was still great enough for an almost unanimously adopted memorial to be presented to the

King of Prussia, with the request that the stern new Prime Minister be replaced by one who was more popular. A picture describing this scene shows a dozen gentlemen in full dress, among them three of the nobility, facing the King in a bare room in Sanssouci. The King was in a towering rage, and the Jewish democrat Jacoby, as the leader of the delegation, asked him: "Does Your Majesty care to listen to the delegation?"

"No!" the King roared at him.

"That is the misfortune of kings," said Jacoby. "They do not care to listen to the truth." The King left the room in indignation.

It was one of the great scenes of German history, because it was the first and the last of its kind. There is no evidence that a German citizen ever uttered similar words to a German prince in the presence of others.

There was still another delegation. The more arrogant the demeanour in Vienna grew, the more steadfastly did the men of Frankfort cling to their purpose of founding the German Reich. In January the King of Prussia had half consented. Now the struggle in Frankfort surged to and fro. A caricature shows the German Emperor being chosen by lot. Many favoured a kind of lifetime president, which would have accorded with the thousand-year-old tradition of the Holy Roman Empire. The hereditary monarchy was at first rejected, but later adopted with a majority of four; and the final vote of 290 favoured the King of Prussia by a slim majority.

The man who offered the German Imperial Crown to the King in the name of the Assembly of the Church of St. Paul—that man was Eduard von Simson. Twenty-two years later the same man offered the same Crown to the King's brother, William I, again at the head of a delegation—and this time he was successful. Bismarck appointed him the first Chief Justice of the Reich Supreme Court, a German Jew.

When, in April 1849, a large delegation entered the Berlin palace to offer the King the imperial crown, none knew whether or not he might accept. Opinion among the German Governments was divided, but a broad popular movement favoured the action. The fact that Bismarck then signed a petition to the King in an attempt to persuade him to accept was later concealed by all the German professors. Evidently the King himself did not know what he wanted. He was, after all, feeble-minded and on the way to being declared incompetent. He offered no reply at all, requesting a delay; but then, after a while, he declined the offer. To his intimates he characterized the crown as "an imaginary circlet composed of scum and mud." The German people, in so far as they

were capable of expressing a representative sentiment, resented this refusal; but the men of Frankfort were not strong enough to return once more to the idea of a German Republic, which they had abandoned only to their sorrow. The Assembly petered out. Its remnant ultimately had to flee to Stuttgart, where it was at least dispersed with honour, that is to say, by force of arms.

Prussia continued to engage in various moves and counter-moves. Both Prussia and Austria mobilized and there were even skirmishes between Bavarians and Prussians—indeed, the Seven Years' War seemed likely to repeat itself after a century. Of the two mad rulers in Berlin and Vienna, only one had been deposed for the time being. At the height of the crisis the Ministers of Prussia and of Austria met late in 1850 in Olmütz. Prussia yielded on all points and actually had to agree to be the first to demobilize. Austria had solved the problem to its own liking. There was no Prussian hegemony, no German Reich. Above all, gratifying the united desires of all the German princes, there was no liberty.

That was the end of the so-called "Second German Revolution." The Peasant Rebellion of 1525 had been put down in terrible battles and then expiated by the blood of thousands of victims. This time the casualties were far smaller. And in the next three years, some three hundred thousand Germans voluntarily set out to breathe the purer air of America. But the popular defeat was all the more severe because this time the middle class had made common cause with the peasants, because fear on the part of the princes had strengthened its position, and because the spirit of the times had at the same time conquered in other lands.

In this revolution, as in other public events, beer, the national drink of the Germans, played a part. It has made the Germans ponderous; but they invented or chose it because they are ponderous. France, the land of wine, necessarily gave rise to a different character; in Germany wine is merely geographically limited to a small region in the West, but it is more expensive and thus rarer than in France, where ninety per cent. of the people drink wine, while ninety per cent. of all Germans drink beer. What lends wings in France acts as a handicap in Germany, in daily use as well as in excess, for the Germans grow intoxicated on beer far more often than the French on wine.

Among the three or four attempts at revolution by the Germans, the Munich Beer Revolution of 1847 was one of the successful ones; for at that time the entire city rose when beer was to rise in price by a ha'penny a quart. Later Munich saw the founding of an "Association

against Unfair Practices in the Retail Liquor Trade." No wonder that Hitler's fiery speeches and great successes all took place in beer cellars, with the crowd rhythmically drumming its steins on the table in time to his rantings—a spectacle reminding one somewhat of the tribal war councils along the upper Nile, with the negroes beating their magic drums.

"Salvator" beer, a particularly heavy brand, is brewed in Munich once a year in the spring-time, in a limited quantity. A kind of pagan cult surrounds its consumption. The good people of Munich, including the women, pawn their coats, their watches, their very beds, in order to wait at dawn beside the cellar door of the beer-house and then to sip the thick, red-brown beer. There they sit throughout the day without rising—for whoever rises loses his place. These rows of hundreds of people, hardly speaking, much less singing, their eyes dull and glazed, are unique in Europe—in Russia, the northern countries and elsewhere, drunkards are always found singly. The systematic German even gets drunk on schedule, on a well-organized assembly line, on a predetermined day.

The student is required to guzzle as well as to duel. At the age of eighteen he has not only ruined his stomach but also any chance of creative ecstasy. For real Bavarian beer depresses. As wine inspires and whisky excites, so beer creates a dullness of the mind in which only orders are expected and carried out. There is a deep relationship between German beer and German obedience.

The love of liberty cannot be acquired. As early as 1836 the German poet Hebbel had predicted: "The Germans know that the wild beasts are free, and thus they are afraid that freedom will turn them into wild beasts. Even in the event of a revolution the Germans might fight for tax freedom, but never for freedom of thought."

Thousands sought freedom of thought overseas. The advantages that accrued to America in 1847-1848 from the defeat of the German intellect may be compared to those the country is to-day drawing from a similar situation. Yet on both occasions the emigrant gained much more than the country of his refuge. That country would have developed even without the aid of Germans—it had an influx of emigrants from all countries. But the man who sought to flee overseas from persecution had little choice, then as to-day. The refugee brings along the best he carries in his heart and head, but he remains a refugee after all. The duty of gratitude lies entirely on his side, and will always remain there!

To-day the intellectual leaders are coming over to escape persecution; but in 1848 the predominant refugee element was that of capable men



—arms, rather than heads; and simple, rather than leading, heads. Karl Schurz was an exception. Here too the German character exhibited its strong and its weak points. The hard-working and dependable character of the German workers quickly became known. On the other hand, even Henry Clay complained of their political unreliability.

To a certain extent, America attracted the best type of German, for *émigrés* did not belong to the majority of ever-obedient Prussians, always standing at attention, but to the tolerant and liberal minority that was developing from the status of subjects into that of citizens. It is a surprising thing that Bismarck was on their side. His conversations with Karl Schurz reflect the opinions he shared with his American friend Motley. Only in part was Bismarck's nature American, for like a full-blooded racehorse he tolerated no check rein. By descent and tradition a country squire, who should have sympathized with the South, he declared in favour of the North, nor was it purely from political sagacity. Even at an advanced age he repeated such sentiments, writing that horses and dogs could not be trained by blows. It was "equally inhuman and stupid," he wrote, to exploit the superiority of the white race.

When Karl Schurz, once an escaped revolutionary, later returned to Germany as an American general, Bismarck not only opened the German border but his own house to him, and enjoyed long talks with him. They understood each other perfectly, and Bismarck assured the *émigré*, returning so surprisingly, that he, Bismarck, would have acted in the same defiance of law in Schurz's place. It was a rare moment when Schurz and Bismarck, sitting alone with each other, toasted each other in Rhine wine, and it proved that even in Germany there are occasionally free spirits.

## 12

THE FIGURE of Bismarck is unique in German history for two reasons. He alone among Germans represents the type of revolutionary conservative who repeatedly attained leadership in other countries. Such a life must include loyalty to the traditional king—loyalty of the kind the other man of this order, Baron vom Stein, never owed his chosen master. True, it also takes a king who accepts his own intellectual submission when he is assured of appearances, form and attitude. The fact that this was possible, that an old gentleman so permeated by a sense of royalty

permitted himself to be ruled for twenty-six years while allowing his Minister to bring his own talents to full fruition—that fact is linked with Bismarck's second quality shared with no other German statesman. His was so quick, nimble and agile a spirit that the poet Mérimée declared him to be a diplomatic Humboldt, "much more brilliant than is seemly for a German." And Zola watched him in the Louvre, "like a jocular giant conversing with a few guests." But Bismarck is unique precisely by the coincidence of German ponderousness and Gallic spirit. In this sense he represents one of the few examples of the fusion of State and spirit, although in a different way from Luther, Hutten and Frederic the Great.

Both tendencies are discernible in his descent. All the qualities that made him a Junker derive from the Bismarcks—his ponderousness, his love of the hunt, of wine, of money, his paternal crudity. Like the Humboldts, the Bismarcks had not produced a single man of importance for centuries. But all that made him a man of spirit, education and agility, coupled with ambition and thirst for power, was derived from his middle-class mother who was descended from eminent jurists and historians. Bismarck's hatred of his mother indicates the resentment of a Junker who liked to believe that his gifts were derived from an aristocratic clan. In its depth this passion can be compared only with Luther's hatred of his mother. Yet with Bismarck this hatred has no sources in fact but only in spirit—his mother had once been inspired by the July revolution, and on another occasion she had taken a picture of a Bismarck ancestor away from him in order to break his aristocratic pride.

These two basic tendencies went to make up a nervous character that wore itself out in contradictions. Though personally brave and militant and accepting challenges to duels even at an advanced age, Bismarck was subject to severe spells of depression, in the form of a romantic melancholia. At the same time he was a persistent hypochondriac, given to crying spells and to smashing medicine bottles in moments of irritation. He was a devotee of the open air who loved the ancient oaks and tall pines beneath which he sought solitude. A powerful man who loved the storm, the sea and the dangerous chase, he was wedded to his daily spell at the desk despite his dislike for writing—indeed, his sloth. He was thoroughly the dictator and with advancing years he grew more and more imperious; yet he had to anticipate the moods of a king; indeed, he always had to acknowledge someone above himself. Only in private life could he describe the King as his mount whom he had to give the spur before the jump. Bismarck grew so used to power that even at the age of seventy-five he was unwilling to surrender it.

In his youth and in his old age Bismarck was very far from being a Christian ; indeed, he was a true Teutonic pagan. In order to remain, however, master of his inner conflict, he did, in the prime of life, reconcile himself to a form of Christianity. This conformed to a vow he made for the sake of a beloved woman. At bottom the situation was similar to that which brought Luther to a monastery, after a vow he later described as an act of self-defence. Bismarck's inner life was entirely devoid of devotion, except perhaps to his wife and his dog. He wasted sentiment neither on the oppressed, nor on his friends, nor even on his own children whom he sought only to rule. At the same time his outward life was harsh and forbidding, utterly lacking in generosity, making him appear the very opposite of a Christian. Yet he needed this artificial structure in the first place because he found the girl that pleased him amid Pietist circles, and as a so-called heretic could make no headway without a "conversion." Later the professed reason was that only in this way could he bear to serve anyone at all, "for the Hohenzollerns are a Swabian family no older than my own." Yet in all likelihood he actually at times believed in his conversion, if only from fondness for his vigilant wife. In so doing he sheltered behind Luther, interpreting Luther's concept of authority in his own way.

Nevertheless, Bismarck at every stage of his life possessed and retained that inner sense of security the German character usually lacks, particularly when imagination and energy compete and seek to paralyze each other. So problematical, so Rembrandt-like a figure as Bismarck would have otherwise been severely impaired in Germany under the burden of his endowments, successes and attainments. Frederic of Hohenstaufen and Charles V were secure in their innate sense of rulership, for they needed to obey no one. Wallenstein lived in a coarser world and fortified his self-assurance by the camp he maintained against the Emperor. Luther failed completely in this point, and Frederic the Great vacillated dangerously. Goethe and Schiller, on the other hand, though their inward situation was utterly different, were entirely at rest with themselves. For almost thirty years Bismarck exercised incomparable power in Germany. Yet he was not faced by one man and one state of affairs as is, let us say, Mussolini to-day, but by a profoundly monarchist people and a master who might at any moment dismiss him with complete impunity ; for Bismarck possessed neither an army nor a party.

This sense of inner security is expressed in the high intellectual level that informs Bismarck's style. German literature can boast not half a dozen letter-writers of his stature, though there are a hundred well-known

authors who are his inferiors. No man of action ever wrote in Germany as did Bismarck, not even Luther, Frederic or Humboldt. If portrait and style reveal character, both refute the simple legend the world has built around Bismarck. He loved neither war nor liberty, for both prevented him from governing. He loved only his own wars and victories over his own adversaries, and his own liberty from foreign power. Since the greater part of his success arose from a knowledge of men, from calculation and from the ability to draw analogies ; since amid the Germans his was truly Latin lucidity and nimbleness of wit, brutal action in the Prussian manner was foreign to him, and he resorted to it but rarely. To win at the great chess game of politics—that was his special pleasure. Among his methods was war. But Bismarck was not a man of blood and iron. He was a man of spirit and steel.

Inwardly he was linked to Goethe and Beethoven ; and he was a great Shakespeare and Schiller expert. But despite his radiant intelligence, despite his cynical analysis, Bismarck was in the end a man of emotion. He was more given to passion, especially to hatred, than Napoleon. This was his German side, the side of the Junkers, for impoverishment and boredom on their estates had necessarily given his ancestors the opportunity to attain certain inner realizations. It was by some strange inversion that Bismarck inherited his emotional life from his father's side, his thirst for power from his ambitious mother. At any rate, the traits that lifted him to success were less German than those that placed him in danger. "Music," he said, "arouses me to contradictory things—war and idyll." The whole anarchical youth of this Byronic cavalier, running its course amid hunting and champagne, betrothals and debts, indicates the duality of his desires, and even in his old age he lapsed into ardent hours of communion with Nature right in the midst of intense activity. Even this yearning for solitude in Nature was a German trait in Bismarck.

In the outside world all this led to a distrust and self-centredness that constantly increased with his power. Nevertheless, Bismarck never tolerated corruption around him, let alone ever engaging in it personally. He tried to deceive the tax collectors and he bought estates with a national gift offering ; he even accepted bonuses for his victories, as was the custom of the British, though no Prussian before Bismarck had ever done so. Furthermore, he underpaid his own people. Yet in order to reap the riches of his foresight, he entrusted his money to the cleverest Jew in Prussia, permitting him to invest, buy or sell entirely according to his best judgment. Since this banker was in many of the secrets, he

had no difficulty in making his great protector rich, while growing rich himself. When we compare the precision with which a dictator of that time kept accounts for himself and his friends, we see how many thousands of fathoms morality has fallen.

In his youth Bismarck inclined favourably toward a republic; but family and tradition, and especially his own insight, led him away from this notion. He held that the German people were not yet ripe for a republic. That view, in addition to his age, constituted the reason why in his last duel for power he did not dare appeal to the people. He knew that the Germans are not in the habit of driving out kings, waiting instead until the kings run away of their own free will. The wrathful forces that restrained Bismarck distinguish him from all the Metternichs and Hardenbergs, while his resilient spirit at the same time sets him apart from Stein. It all went to make him a power politician, and in the word *Realpolitik*, which he favoured, the *Real* can be omitted without changing the sense. Bismarck never said, "Might goes before right," as is often quoted, but he did accept as a fact that there are situations in which such a phrase applies. With all of his class feeling and his hostility toward the people, he would never have desired to live in a lawless State like present-day Germany.

For beneath the play of political power, beneath his hatred of men and his thirst for power, German, Faustian thought flowed, strong and invisible, in Bismarck. But rarely did he let it come to the surface, though occasionally perhaps speaking of the many souls within his breast, into many of which he had never been granted insight. He was already old when he wrote to his sister "that my present station makes me feel constantly less at ease than all my former stations and that one must not cease to drive onward without rest, in hope of a better station." That was the reason he loved Beethoven and rejected Mozart. That was why he said that he would gladly retire to a desert island with a few volumes of Goethe.

The student of German character will find a dangerous and beautiful specimen in Bismarck.

## 13

WHEN BISMARCK was called to power in the year 1862, he leaped into a stormy whirlpool.

The old jealousy between Prussia and Austria had increased even

further in the fifties. William I (1861-1888), younger brother of the romantic King, had taken his place at the head of Prussia in 1858, at first as Regent, in place of the insane brother, later as his successor. Even then William was in his sixties, and he was much hated among the people because of his attitude in the Revolution of 1848, though it was precisely this attitude that linked him with Bismarck. The one desire that dominated his mind was a strong army. During the Italian War his attitude had been patriotically directed against France and in favour of Austria. But when he demanded command of the Union Army, the Viennese preferred making peace and ceding Lombardy to giving so much power into the hands of their German rival. The disillusionment that followed in Berlin served William to agitate for army reform. He demanded more and more money, but the liberal majority of the Diet granted only half of his demands and even these but provisionally. A manifesto which he issued upon ascending the throne served to strengthen the opposition. In this crisis between the King and the Parliament, the King called upon his ambassador to Paris, Bismarck, to head the Government.

The two men shared personal courage ; but a difference in age of some twenty years forced them into a father-and-son relationship. What distinguished them was pace, and even to-day the first clashes between master and servant read like the stormy scenes between a king and a crown prince. Their moral bases were different, for William was a devout Christian. When his new Chancellor intimated that a war was necessary for the conquest of Schleswig, the King said : " But I have no right to do that "—the very words Maria Theresa had used a century before with her son. Yet whenever the King had won a victory, in this instance as later on, he felt himself an officer and a conqueror and had to be restrained by his Chancellor. When matters came to a complete impasse the King was in the habit of writing out his abdication—he was steeped in the officers' tradition. He was chivalrous and simple-minded, while Bismarck was ruthless and shrewd. At no important point in his career did the King ever make a suggestion—but on three or four vital occasions Bismarck was able to prevail against him only by genuine crying spells and pretended resignations. " It was on my own shoulders," Bismarck said later, " that I carried him to the Imperial Throne."

In Europe meanwhile, the idea of nationalism had won through to victory. Napoleon's nephew had become Emperor by means of a *coup d'état*, and France seemed to grow strong again, menacing Germany

anew. Bismarck, who saw the situation maturing but slowly, merely sought friendship with France for the time being. Within Prussia, Bismarck did not gain influence until after 1860. Thus the powers of the Junkers, gathered in a new House of Lords, increased again—for the lower chamber of Prussia, the House of Deputies, was elected by citizens who voted according to their incomes, a millionaire being able to elect a deputy all by himself while it might take 50,000 workers to elect another. This state of affairs was retained in Prussia right down to 1918. The Police State, with its system of spies and informers, regained the strength it had had at the time of Frederic the Great. Preachers and professors were under surveillance, and one Junker actually cried out in public: "Science must turn back!" The situation was quite similar to that in our own days except that there were no concentration camps and murders.

When Bismarck came to power he first had to master the bourgeois opposition which in its mounting self-assurance barred his way. The liberal middle class was led by jurists and scholars sprung from an enlightened philosophy or, like Virchow, from science—men of sincerity and great courage, after the fashion of the Frankfort delegate who had spoken to the King about truth. Though they were not rich themselves, all regarded property as inviolate and set themselves completely apart from the new Communist ideas.

Thus the German workers, who then still lacked all but a semblance of education and leadership, and who had hardly taken the first step in organization, could only be led by renegade commoners. The man who rose to be their leader was Ferdinand Lassalle (1825-1864).

## 14

AROUND 1850 the three cleverest Germans besides Bismarck and Schopenhauer were three Jews—Heine, Marx and Lassalle. This was a unique constellation and it has never been repeated.

All three knew each other and for a while held each other in esteem. They were of middle-class extraction, from the Rhineland and from Silesia, and all three had been baptized in youth because they had slight inner concern with Judaism, which, on the other hand, impeded them outwardly. All three began as philosophers and at the same time as

creative writers. But compared to Heine's exalted level, Lassalle wrote but one poor, tendentious drama, while Marx in his youth wrote whole volumes of verse. Lassalle and Marx dealt with the Greeks—Heraclitus and Epicurus, equally remote from the people and from politics—while Heine presented German philosophy to the French. The two former were Communists; Heine was constantly predicting Communism though perhaps without desiring it. Heine's was the most spirited German; Marx wrote a heavy, hammered style; but only Lassalle among them was an orator, and for that reason alone he was exposed to dangers as a writer. Heine was far too much the aesthete to give himself over to action, and he regarded young Lassalle with affectionate envy when Lassalle visited him in Paris. Marx, however, regarded Lassalle with jealousy, for it was Lassalle alone who literally hurled himself into the stream of events. He was, incidentally, the only one of the three who was in sound health and thus could hope to withstand the strain.

All three of these Jews were attracted by non-Semitic women. All his life Marx loved only his wife, a brunette German aristocrat. Lassalle was linked in friendship and love with two fair Teutonic women of the aristocracy. Even Heine who loved so many women seems to have had no relations with Jewesses after his early youth. At the same time two interesting Berlin Jewesses, Rachel Lewin and Dorothea Veit, married men of pure German blood. The attraction between the two races was a natural one, and even to-day has a creative effect.

These three eminent thinkers all dealt with the German State, each in a different field: Heine as a warning critic from Paris; Marx as a political theorist of the first rank; Lassalle as a fighter and leader. All three, in their love for Germany, were less critical than other German thinkers. These three Jews reveal no stern judgments of the kind we have quoted from the pens of some twenty great Germans. They loved Germany despite the fact that, or perhaps precisely because, they were in turn suppressed, imprisoned or exiled, Heine and Marx actually spending their periods of greatness abroad. Heine's nostalgia for the homeland he was forced to leave sounds very much like that of Goethe and of so many Germans for Italy which they in turn had to leave after a short sojourn.

Nowhere did the Jewish and the German qualities and talents that were blended in all of the three interfere with each other; on the contrary they enhanced each other. As though springing from the same source, ambition grew in each one of them, and even the nervous sensitivity that represented a danger for them all derived from both



branches of their origins. Heine, more delicate and self-denying, was inclined to acknowledge others; Lassalle and Marx were unable to tolerate anyone beside themselves and for that reason fell out even among themselves. Both were no less dictatorial than Bismarck.

All their lives the three of them pondered profoundly the subject of fame; indeed, their will to live in the after-world was even more passionate than their will to live. Each had tasted fame, but none had had enough. Had they aspired to pleasures and riches, how easily their radiant minds could have made new Rothschilds of them! But instead a spirit of Marx's eminence took upon itself a life of misery in which even the money to buy a casket for a dead child was lacking. All three were impelled by their wills to shape their thoughts and feelings, but at the same time to attain fame in a world in which their fathers as Jews had still been regarded almost in the light of pariahs. That fame they attained to a greatly varying degree.

Heine had a distinct presentiment that he, half a Frenchman, would still some day be counted a German poet, and to-day it seems like tragic irony that the most popular of all German *Lieder*, the "Lorelei," was written by this Jew. Marx, whose most important work remained almost without effect at the time, was able to think only in centuries, unless he wished to despair. Lassalle, on the other hand, thought everything possible, and foretold to his fair-haired mistress that he would drive with her through the Brandenburg Gate, behind four white horses, as the presidential couple of the German Republic. Was this Semitic ambition or German imagination? Was it German mysticism or Jewish prophecy? Perhaps Lassalle was touched with greater genius than the two other men, but he wore out more quickly. Heine perpetuated himself in a series of poems and Marx in a system, while Lassalle surged by and in the end even permitted himself, from nervous vanity, to be shot dead in a duel with a petty baron.

The fact that Marx, Engels and Lassalle were not born among the working-class nor lived with it did not unfit them for leadership. At the time there were not yet any other popular leaders. Even Hutten, in whom Lassalle actually projected himself in a play, and Sickingen were not peasants, yet they were able to lead the peasants. But Lassalle's dreams were so magnificent, his house so much that of a romantic gentleman, that personally he remained a stranger to the workers though his gift of oratory succeeded in carrying them away for the cause in a manner unequalled by anyone else. In stature and features he was a descendant of those aristocratic Portuguese Jews to whom Spinoza too

belonged. But his mind tended wholly toward power, and in his youth he was inclined to unify the Jews as later on he attempted to unify the workers. Had he lived longer he would have desired to unify the Germans, once he had reached the top—unify them by means of the sword, quite like Bismarck. For in his play he praised the power of the sword, as he praised the power of Prussia in his speeches and letters ; and he hated Austria more than did Bismarck.

Even Marx, the classical cosmopolitan, had nationalist sentiments. His criticism of the Germans never attained the level of Goethe or Nietzsche ; and he incensed even the Russian Bakunin when he explained that the Slavs had to be educated by the Germans, because the Germans possessed the superior culture. To-day's ironic epilogue has made him master with those same Slavs, putting him in the right in a manner no one could have foreseen. The fact that, like Heine, he always yearned to be back in Germany indicates his inner bond with Germany. Lassalle expressed his admiration for the Germans in bombastic superlatives. When the utterances of these three Jews about their fatherland are compared with those of Goethe or Alexander von Humboldt their inner mood is revealed to be much more nationalist in character. Thus we see by means of these three eminent examples that the emancipation of the Jews, begun by Napoleon but only carried to completion in 1848, had its own reward for Germany. The sons of these newly emancipated Jews were even more nationalist in sentiment. Among their grandsons in the twentieth century there were thousands of highly educated Jews whose ambition it was to become high German officials, if possible army officers, and then to fight and die for their fatherland on the battlefield.

## 15

BISMARCK and Lassalle appeared to be born allies, at least in the winter of 1863-1864. Both of them opposed Austria and the Liberals. True, the workers, then for the first time organized into an association by Lassalle, distrusted the Junkers ; but they hated the middle class and tended toward union with the extreme Right in exactly the same fashion as Stalin and Hitler in our own day. Then too, the similarity in method—the belief in power, the doubt about parliamentarism—bridged classes and prejudices. Bismarck, who saw a void yawning before him, was at the

time prepared to make common cause with the Devil. Lassalle who sought support for social democracy, then in the throes of birth, felt the same way. Each regarded the other as the Devil.

But each was enchanted by the other. Bismarck declared that Lassalle, whom he saw intimately for but a few dozen hours, was one of the wittiest and most likeable men he had ever met ; and Lassalle wooed Bismarck in urgent letters. At the time both men were still equally obscure, but they recognized each other. The one, following his origins and his career, had chosen the King, the other the masses. Even though this budding alliance between them never grew feasible, it certainly bore the marks of genius.

Both men were of equal height, but while the one was stocky like his mastiffs, the other was delicately put together like a greyhound. Both were highly cultured and of nervous temperament and both of them loved Prussia. Thus they faced each other, determined in case of a pact to deceive one another as thoroughly as possible. The analogy with the present day would be striking if only our own two dictators were as talented as those two. At the time a great many things were possible, even universal suffrage, which Lassalle attempted to prevail upon Bismarck to introduce, and which Bismarck actually put into effect eight years later. Lassalle's premature death prevented an agreement that was at best possible between these two personalities because they attracted each other.

The question of power found parliamentary expression in the opposition of the liberal middle class against an enlarged Army and other army reforms. It became acute in 1863 on the occasion of the Danish succession, when the Danes, in defiance of treaties, sought to annex Schleswig which was joined to them solely by the personal union of the Crown. When the nationalist movement of the year 1848 sprang up anew and all Germany, prince and people, enthusiastically favoured taking Schleswig and Holstein into the German League, Bismarck attempted to win both countries for Prussia, entirely on his own ; or, since he had to take Austria into consideration, to conquer them for the present in league with Austria. Under Prussia's leadership the two powers won the victories at Düppel and Alsen (1864). By means of a complex game of chess between the great powers, Bismarck at the time, between battles in Denmark, simultaneously assuaged Austria's distrust, Napoleon's anger, the opposition of German public opinion, and above all the resistance of his own king, until the two conquered provinces for the time being became the common property of the two powers. He needed a prince for this purpose, and

later he said : " I hitched the Duke of Augustenburg to the plough like an ox ; but when the plough was under way I unhitched the ox again." In this single sentence the vivid imagery of his style and his country squire's contempt for princes stand revealed.

But all this was only a prologue, for Bismarck was determined to exclude Austria entirely from Germany. He did not hesitate to exclude eight million Germans, for he was a Prussian rather than a German, nor was he a European in any sense of the word. Metternich before him had tried the European way of doing things, yet in the end he had failed. And if Metternich is credited with having maintained a long peace for Germany with his policy of the balance of power, Bismarck deserves identical credit. Metternich's peace lasted for thirty-nine years ; Bismarck's for forty-three. The peace actually continued after the fall of both of these statesmen, in the one case for sixteen years, in the other for twenty-four. Thus in each instance it was no mere armistice, but an actual reorganization of Europe. Both merely suffered from the defect of being purely feudal rather than social in character.

The so-called " Greater German Solution," that was to embrace all Germans and that was the aim of the best men in Frankfort, was possible only in the event of the dissolution of the Hapsburg monarchy. But this demanded a major defeat of the motley country—a defeat that did not come until 1918. During the nineteenth century the ancient Empire held together more by gravity than by the intelligence of any one of its leaders, to say nothing of the affection harboured by any of its peoples for the dynasty. Had Bismarck, as was subsequently demanded of him, sought *Anschluss*, he would have had to set free six alien nations along the Danube, instituting six kings or presidents. It was too early for that in 1860. Nevertheless the civil war which the Prussians deliberately provoked against Austria in 1866 was far less culpable, even regarded from a lofty moral level, than the war Frederic the Great had begun in 1740. Both sought to strengthen Prussia, but while Frederic was after only the province, and got no more, Bismarck was after the union of almost all Germans ; and he achieved it.

In point of fact he thought up this war purely as an individual, and foisted it upon the two nations, for which reason he became the most hated man in Prussia. Bismarck had all the forces arrayed against him—the liberals from conviction, the workers from solidarity, the clerics from morality, the Queen from fear, the Crown Prince from love of peace, and finally the King because he was almost seventy. There were panic and fear among the enemy, whose subject peoples were restive and who

was short of money. Bismarck by no means had the Army on his own side, but only a few generals, above all General Roon, a very honest man. In addition Bismarck for the time being enjoyed a certain sympathy on the part of Napoleon III, whom he had shortly before visited and won over in masterly fashion. Also on his side was young Italy, in the process of growth, which Bismarck obligated by treaty to enter the war against Austria soon after Prussia.

In these weeks when everything depended upon the high-strung man of fifty-one, who now raged, now suffered, a youth strode up close to him one noon in May in the street Unter den Linden, firing twice at point-blank range. Unarmed but strong as he was, Bismarck, whose nature never ran toward asking for protection in the form of bodyguards or policemen, struck the pistol from the assassin's hand before the third shot had been fired, thus saving his own life. One bullet had found its mark, but as is often the case with game, it had ricocheted from a resilient rib. All the world mourned that the attempt had failed. Only a fraction of an inch to one side, and the man would have been dead, the war never waged.

While the rib in Bismarck's body snapped back into place under the bullet's impact, Kark Marx in London was writing that history was purely a consequence of economic factors.

Shortly afterwards, in June, Bismarck was able to use a formal breach of treaty on the part of the Austrians as a pretext to strike. After issuing ultimatums, he was even able to have the smaller States of Saxony, Hanover and Hesse-Cassel occupied without a shot being fired. The Prussian Army, in which no one exhibited any great enthusiasm, then carried the day because of its courage and discipline—also because it had skilful generals and a new and improved rifle. At about the same time the Italians, who had been attacking from the South, were beaten at Custoza and Lissa. The war, which lasted only a few weeks, was decided in the battle at Königgrätz (Sadowa) in Bohemia. The Austrians were defeated on this crucial day—partially for the reason that Benedek, their best general and a great expert on Italy, had been sent to Bohemia against his will, on the ground that an archduke who was supposed to be in command there must not be exposed to the possibility of defeat. Thus the House of Hapsburg came out the loser partly for reasons of prestige. It lost Venetia in the South.

It lost nothing to Prussia. For when the King and the generals, flushed with blood and the thunder of battle, sought to march straight on Vienna after the victory, they found the one man who had instigated this war

squarely blocking their way like a colossus. These soldiers took into account neither the great losses nor the incipient cholera, and still less the situation in Europe. But Napoleon had been filled with alarm and had dispatched emissaries to Prussian headquarters in order to mediate. Bismarck recognized that he might be able to wage war against France, and perhaps would have to do so, but not to-morrow. It was at this point that he exhibited that moderation which antiquity placed at the head of all virtues. He sought neither land nor money from the vanquished foe, least of all the humiliation of a victorious march into Vienna which could have perpetuated only hatred. To conciliate the enemy of yesterday, lest he to-morrow help the French; alliance rather than conquest; friendship rather than humiliation—these were his aims. There were violent scenes in the castle at Nikolsburg, and when the King exclaimed that the main culprit must not go unpunished Bismarck showed himself at his full historical stature with the reply: "It is not for us here to hold judgment, but to make German policy. For the rest, Austria's struggle for existence against Prussia is no more culpable than our own struggle against Austria."

Now the generals too began to hate him. He offered his resignation, intending to join his regiment as an officer; at the same time he considered throwing himself out of a window. He knew well that the King could not replace him, but the relationship between the two was then but four years old and had not ripened into friendship; and many tried to persuade the King to drop Bismarck.

The fact that the King at this moment yielded really made him dependent upon his adviser for the rest of his life. He did so in a curiously comical rescript, subsequently trampling upon his pen.

Thus Bismarck joined defeated Austria to its German brother. On this day he stood at a peak which he never again attained.

## 16

PRUSSIA had won the leadership in Germany. At the same time, it had been enlarged by the annexation of Hanover, Hessen and Schleswig-Holstein. To the Junkers such events conveyed the same ideas as they had to their ancestors, the robber barons, or their descendants, the Nazis. Thus the aristocratic court officials in Berlin had every intention, after

the annexation of Hesse, of making for the wine cellar of the local prince, a foray Bismarck laughingly had to prevent. After blowing up the German League, Bismarck at once founded the "North German League" (1867-1871), giving it the new flag of black-white-red, composed of the Prussian flag plus that of the Hanseatic League. Because of the new additions, Prussia's votes in the Frankfort League Assembly had risen—for this Assembly continued for the time being, with some modifications. The King of Prussia had the "presidium," while Bismarck as "League Chancellor" was responsible to the North German Reichstag. The transition from a Federation of States to a federative State was as yet by no means clarified.

These changes ushered in parliamentary government in Germany. For while the Frankfort Assembly had been suspended in mid air, the newly elected North German Reichstag now enabled a part of the German people to exercise the right to refuse to appropriate funds, thus influencing foreign policy. War and peace as well as the matter of alliances were reserved solely for the discretion of the presiding King of Prussia. This state of affairs continued in the German Reichstag under the Emperor. One trick Bismarck used to strengthen his position was to combine Prime Ministership and the Chancellorship in one person, for the present his own—another tradition that was continued down to 1918. Since he desired sole responsibility with the ministers merely his subordinates, there was even greater need for control. And since this Constitution was not handed down from on high by the grace of God, but voted by representatives of the people, what follows remains of great significance. The matter of final control of the Government by the people was rejected, with 230 against only 53 in favour, nearly one century after Americans and Frenchmen and two centuries after Englishmen had decided to govern themselves. Not until half a century later, in 1918, did the German people enter their own Government; and fourteen years later they relinquished the burden to Hitler with a sigh of relief.

Since at the same time the new diets of the individual States continued their existence, there was considerable competition between parliaments in Germany up to the time of the Republic. To Bismarck, who accepted all of this only because it was demanded by the trend of the times, this rivalry between the two parliaments in Prussia was not unwelcome. He said that this new method must be discredited by glutting the people with it, in the same way that pastry-shop apprentices are given as many sweets as they can eat.

The conflict in Prussia had been ended without any further effort,

by the war victories. These had the same effect on the internal crisis as, say, the birth of a child on contending spouses. Bismarck was shrewd enough subsequently to plead for indemnities. The liberals divided, a large part of the citizens of Prussia turning nationalist in sentiment. It was not hard at this time to govern in Prussia. In Germany victories have always weakened the power to think. The only inkling of a new era was furnished by a few Social Democrats. Only a few experts clearly perceived the inner rise of Prussia and the inner decline of France, in the next three years; dictatorships always seem to retain the full life of their splendour and fanfare down to the final moment. Then, when their inner rottenness has undermined them, they collapse all of a sudden.

The story of the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), a story that need not be retold here, contains one point at the beginning that is time and again brought up against Germany and that therefore may claim correction by a resolute critic. This war was not made by Germany, nor were the documents concerning its outbreak forged by Germany.

True, Bismarck during these years was constantly on the lookout for a situation that would enable him to attain German unity, with or without France's approval. Indeed, there were moments when the opposition of the States of southern Germany seemed to represent more of an obstacle than that of Napoleon. Yet the war was actually brought about in Paris, by a court that was in part arrogant, in part fearful—a court that heard the subterranean rumblings and was looking for a way out. The ambition of the Empress, the arrogance of the Duke of Gramont, the growing unpopularity of the Emperor—in short, the ancient law of dictatorships, to the effect that they cannot maintain themselves when standing still, or even when thriving, without new spectacles and new proofs of their power—all this provoked a war which the enemy desired but was quite willing to await. The people on both sides had nothing whatever to do with it.

When the conflict about the Spanish succession threatened to become acute, Bismarck at first yielded. When Napoleon's ambassador then doubled his demands in order to gain either war or the humiliation of Prussia, King William rebuffed him. That this happened on the promenade of the watering-place at Ems, where the old gentleman was taking his constitutional, was merely a symbol of the French war party's impatient arrogance. The King sent a wire about the incident to his Minister in Berlin, with the express injunction to communicate the incident to all the foreign envoys and the entire press. The King's



purpose in publishing some impertinent French demands was perfectly justifiable, and customary both from a personal and a political viewpoint.

The "Ems Dispatch" is twenty-four lines long and is written in the ponderous style of a privy councillor who has inherited two centuries of bureaucratic verbiage from his ancestors. It was a telegram by the servant of a King to that King's minister, sent for the purpose of providing world news. Hundreds of such telegrams are drafted by hundreds of ministers or secretaries. Bismarck certainly could not have published it in its original form. By shortening it to twelve lines, at one place actually softening the King's expression, he deliberately sharpened the danger of war provoked by Paris, taking over the tone used by Paris. In every sense, as a politician, as an official and as a stylist, he was entitled to this editorial job. The "Ems Dispatch" can stand up before any court, any parliament and any historian.

But when Napoleon was beaten and captured within a few weeks at Sedan, the political aim of the war changed. Some of the Socialists had voted for the war credit—two had abstained from voting. Now that the Germans continued the war against the young French Republic, the Socialists voted against the new credits and opposed the movement that had suddenly grown up in Germany around the demand for the French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. Only the German people themselves could have forced a halt to the war at this point, and in view of the constant victories the German people seemed to be enjoying the war.

It was at this time that General von Moltke, who was half a Dane, demonstrated his ability. With his lean, spiritualized head, his taciturnity and his poetic efforts, he was an almost isolated figure among the typical Prussian generals. This exceptional type of German general staff officer has always existed. But even these grave and highly cultivated men have never been able to overcome the traditions of their Prussian craft. Thus Moltke wrote that perpetual peace was a dream, adding, "and not even a beautiful dream."

Bismarck, whose entire career proves him to be a constructive statesman, differing even in this quality from his destructive successors of to-day, was at that time far more concerned with German unity than with a French defeat. When he had succeeded at the outbreak of the war in involving the states of southern Germany on his side, he himself was surprised. Now that the troops consisting of different German stocks were advancing victoriously, he recognized that the moment had come, with the people fighting shoulder to shoulder, to surprise

the princes too with his proposals. He concocted the German Reich as a skilful cook beats up an *omelette surprise*.

That he chose the ancient Royal Palace of the Bourbons for the solemn coronation, even before the armistice had been signed and the capital of France conquered—that was his own notion. Perhaps it was a bit of poetic inspiration, but surely it was a blunder from the viewpoint of a statesman, for Bismarck was committing the very error he had avoided four years earlier in refusing to march against Vienna. That the choice fell upon Versailles must have aroused resentment in the heart of every Frenchman for decades to come. The German people were not consulted at all, for the delegation from the Reichstag that arrived at Headquarters did not by any means offer William the crown, as had been the case with his brother in 1849; it was merely permitted to declare its consent to the decision of the princes.

William, quite like his brother, had not wanted to receive the emissaries of the people at all, finally doing so only under pressure from Bismarck. When the proclamation took place in Versailles, the German people were not represented. There were only uniforms in the Hall of Mirrors, and the only man who wore no military uniform was the court preacher, who wore the uniform of his church.

Even the princes were not nearly so happy as they appear to be in the pictures of the event. The King of Bavaria, who had to copy a letter forwarded to him by Bismarck, offering the crown to his more or less hated rival, shortly afterwards donned mourning attire. The Crown Prince called the entire procedure an artfully wrought chaos. William on his part was furious, and did not desire "to exchange the splendid crown of Prussia for this crown of filth." He was seventy-three years old at the time, but on the very eve of the great event suffered crying spells like a bride on the eve of her wedding. Since there had to be a wedding, the very bridal dress became a bone of contention. The King did not want to become German Emperor, but Emperor of Germany, and Bismarck was unable to concede that, because of considerations of law. This infuriated the old gentleman to such an extent that in Versailles, when he descended from his dais in plain view of everyone, he passed Bismarck without a sign of greeting to shake hands with the generals and princes. A thousand years earlier Charlemagne had been crowned in the face of similar internal struggles.

The King took his vengeance when peace was concluded. On this occasion he, together with his Junkers and generals, won a fateful victory over Bismarck. Bismarck had succeeded in attaining peace without

annexation after the war against Austria ; but he failed in the same purpose after that against France.

Even in the most recent years Bismarck had given no thought to Alsace and Lorraine. There is no mention of annexing them in any document or letter from his hand, and some of these contain amazingly intimate revelations. The logical solution for that problem was independence and neutrality, at the very least a plebiscite. But now the generals insisted that a French line from the Alps to the sea—something similar to what we called the Maginot Line—would raise insuperable difficulties so long as there was no German Navy as a counterbalance. The Emperor on his part felt that the corner of Alsace near Weissenburg, which projected into Germany, cut off the South Germans. Bismarck yielded to this objection, but more specifically to the victorious mood of the generals and the King's menacing attitude. The King felt that he was being deceived a second time. It was evidently his chivalrous notion that it was his task to reconquer for Germany the regions his ancestor had surrendered to the Sun King in return for a yearly stipend.

Yet Bismarck professed no nationalist illusions, either to himself or to others, of the kind that were then agitating Germany. "The notion that Alsace was formerly German," he said, "is a pet idea of the professors. What we need is fortresses. . . . I find the acquisition of Lorraine distasteful, but the generals regard Metz as indispensable, since it is the equivalent of 120,000 men." In this way some two million people, whose lower classes speak a gibberish mixture of the two languages, embarked upon almost fifty years of misery under the heel of Prussia, though later too, in the years from 1918 to 1940, they were by no means content. Two great nations were not capable of making a small area between them independent according to the principles of reason. To-morrow this shameful ado will begin anew.

## 17

BISMARCK, the Junker, the victor, the reactionary—Bismarck turned liberal. From 1871 to 1878 he governed with the help of liberals in the German Reichstag which was merely the old North German League Assembly enlarged by the inclusion of the southern States. These liberals, it is true, were somewhat watered down. The most hide-bound Junkers

had already moved apart from Bismarck after the Austrian war, and they were soon followed by the members of his own class and kin. He had become too powerful for them. Nor was he a friend of the Catholics. To be Catholic was at the time regarded as a mark of distinction in Berlin, especially if one was not actually Catholic. The Empress herself stood at the head of this vogue.

Immediately after the founding of the Reich, Bismarck became involved in a grave conflict with the newly founded Catholic party, the Centre. Once again there rose the shadow of those Henrys and Gregorys who once upon a time filled the German Middle Ages with their clangour. It was not the Pope's declaration of the dogma of Papal infallibility, which took place at this time—Bismarck, who regarded no one as infallible, not even himself, merely laughed at that. Nor was it a case of a Protestant staging a new Reformation. It was simply that Bismarck acted as a dictator who tolerated no other power in the land, particularly no international power. In addition there were personal feuds.

Windthorst, formerly Minister of the now annexed Hanover, fought against Prussia as a Guelph (a follower of the deposed King of Hanover), and it was he who now became the head of the Catholic Party. Indeed, perhaps this gruff, disconcerting, dry and extremely shrewd man may be called Germany's first parliamentarian, and also its last. In the beginning the conflict was a tame affair—the only effort that was made was to bring about the downfall of the priests who resisted; but an attempt on Bismarck by a Catholic fanatic in the year 1874 sharpened the conflict. Parochial schools were put under government supervision, civil marriage was introduced, appointments of priests had to be made public, there were removals and prison sentences, religious orders were outlawed and more than a thousand parsonages stood empty. These measures served to heighten the temper of the people—particularly in Poland and Alsace, where the German régime was meeting with opposition as it was. The Centre increased its strength in the Reichstag to ninety-two. For Deputies in Germany were still able to offer public resistance, even when their party was under fire.

The German Reichstag gave the nation a new forum of discussion during the 'seventies. This body, the first truly elected representative body of the German people, became a vehicle of political education, of the kind the Western countries had enjoyed for one or two centuries—or it might have become such a vehicle. For from this moment on—that is to say, for the past seventy years—the people, who now shared in

the Government, must share the responsibility for everything that happened in Germany. Classes and prejudices continued, and continue to this day, but, from the time that the German people seventy years ago came to know what a ballot looked like, they took over at least a part of the responsibility before history. Henceforth, the things the German people did, and especially the things they failed to do, no longer illuminate exclusively the character of princes and Junkers but their own character—the character of the German people.

At the time, eminent thinkers and fighters emerged before the nation in the Reichstag ; and as in every epoch the Left was richer in such men than the Right. Men like Virchow and Richter appeared as the heirs of the men who made the Reformation ; ideas were contested ; and for the first time the German spirit appeared in an organ of the State. A handful of highly cultured men also came to the fore on the Right.

Added to this came the crisis of German industry, interrupted by a great crisis, then followed by a new boom. The era of the so-called “ founding frenzy ” was new and shortlived in Germany, for as yet speculation did not fit into the German character. It was an event when in the year 1872 alone some five hundred new enterprises with a capital of a billion and a half marks came into being in Prussia. It was at this time that the six great German banks arose, though the first of them had been founded as early as 1851. The fact that between 1870 and 1890 their capital was only trebled demonstrates that the contemporary Germans took the rise of business in their stride. The two great steamship lines, the Hamburg-American Line and the North German Lloyd, saw a rapid rise. The German population increased from thirty-five million in 1850 to fifty million in 1890. Everyone sought to move to the cities, and around 1890 already one-half of the German population was urban. By 1895 no more than nineteen per cent. of the Germans were engaged in agriculture. This transition, which proceeded with similar speed in other countries, did as much to damage the German character as it did to enhance the national wealth. All nations need the vast heavy masses that cling to the soil and whose voices sound beneath the turmoil of the cities as the organ sounds below a choir of human voices. But with the Germans this step away from the soil was faster, more passionate and restless. On the land, there was naturally less of what we have called the German sense of insecurity ; in the cities, that sense was bound to rise. Since in Germany the rising standard of living went hand in hand with the development of representative government, the urban population had a greater oppor-

tunity to be represented by men of its own kind than did the peasants on the land. The result was a gulf that was perhaps even greater than in other countries.

Here too there began the head-on clash between capital and labour. After Lassalle's death there had been a split in the ranks of Social Democracy. The names of those two first Socialists who abstained from voting in the North German Assembly and who then spoke out for French freedom in the middle of the war against France—those names were Bebel and Liebknecht.

Bebel was the first worker to enter the scene of public affairs in Germany, belatedly, because there had been no revolution. It is symbolic that he was the son of a sergeant and the stepson of a prison guard—even as a child, he was an eye-witness to German cruelty. He was the Man of the People that Lassalle would have liked to be, but his voice did not penetrate very far beyond his own party. Quite evidently of greater importance was Liebknecht, descended from a line of scholars, a man whose whole life was clarity, integrity and effort, and who looked like the best type of Teuton. He was descended from Luther, and a youthful portrait, while it does not show him to resemble Luther, emphasizes his likeness to the general reformer type. At the time he wore the uniform of a Free Corps—he was a *Burschenschafter*, and as a student he dreamed of emigrating to a Communist colony in Wisconsin. He was one of those whom the uprising of 1848 kept away from America; he was sentenced and later amnestied.

In the year 1869 these two men, the carpenter and the politician, founded the Social Democratic Workers' Party in Eisenach. Its primary aim was a Constitution after the Swiss or at least the Zurich model, with a militia, popular referendum and freedom of the press; its ultimate aim was a republic. The light sentence of incarceration in a fortress brought both men two happy years. For once Bebel, who was poor and in ill health, was able to regain his strength at Government expense while learning from Liebknecht languages, history and much other knowledge which he lacked. There they sat together like Sickingen and Hutten, both of them already in their thirties, the older man teaching, the younger learning; and perhaps the pleasant fortress was not very different from the garden of that ancient knightly castle.

The struggle in the parliament between Junkers and liberals, liberals and workers, Church and State, continued in rather normal fashion for seven years.

Meanwhile in France clergymen and men of letters preached revenge.

The statue representing the City of Strasbourg in Paris was shrouded in grey. Indeed, there was praying in the churches for the return of the lost provinces. An alliance of three Catholic powers against the new Germany seemed possible. All the world distrusted Bismarck, the man who had waged three wars in six years. Queen Victoria saw a new Napoleon in him. Unrest in the Balkans increased and furnished welcome pretexts. Everything seemed to push Bismarck in the direction of marching once again against weakened France. Moltke, with his giant army, counted on the year 1876. To-day some historians reproach Bismarck with the blunder of not having destroyed France at the time.

But Bismarck did not stir, keeping the peace of Europe for twenty years. Had he craved new glory and new territory, that world power of which he had read in German history, he could have had it all in the 'seventies—or at least he might have made the attempt to win it. But he remained temperate—indeed, he even avoided blustering.

In the year 1878 he changed the course of German policy. He had retired for many months to study economics, at the age of sixty-two. Now he came forward as an advocate of the protective tariff. At the same time he made his peace with the Pope, Pius IX, the long struggle against the Catholic Church ending without either side being the victor. Bismarck had turned anti-liberal and now anti-socialist as well. He seized upon two attempts on the Emperor, one of which gravely wounded the octogenarian, as a pretext for action. Russian Nihilism seemed to be at the bottom of one of the plots, and Bismarck exploited this in order to pin responsibility upon the German Socialists—who had nothing to do with the affair. Typical of the basic temper of the two men—the Emperor and the Chancellor—is their indignation at the fact that the assassin, instead of using a bullet, fired upon the Emperor with a shot-gun, as though hunting rabbits. Bismarck now wreaked his vengeance on the Socialist Party, which was completely innocent, because it had grown to half a million votes and was publishing more than two hundred newspapers. He went over to the conservatives and together with them put over emergency legislation directed against the Socialists.

We have become accustomed to following the old age of great men with growing interest, because experience, wisdom and mastery seem to be distilled in purer and purer form. Jesus, though He died so young, visibly grows in the final year. Napoleon, as a man, is at his height in St. Helena. Goethe, in his final year, ascended to the conclusion of *Faust*, Beethoven to the Ninth Symphony. The last works of Rembrandt and Titian are sacred treasures. But Bismarck, like Cromwell, Luther

and Metternich, is among those whose curve declined with age. The reasons are manifold in nature.

In matters of foreign policy, he remained the master even in the second decade of his chancellorship. Indeed, the Congress of Berlin (1878), at which the Balkan questions were settled, placed Germany in the key position of Europe for the first time since the Congress of Vienna—Berlin and Prussia actually for the first time in their history. With France too relations grew better year by year, and, since Bismarck at the same time concluded complex treaties with Russia and Austria, the nightmare of possible alliances against the new German Reich that haunted him into his old age occasionally lifted.

Bismarck's basic thought in the twenty years after he completed its unification derived from Germany's geographic situation. He held that Germany, with its long land borders in the East and West, was compelled to a defence on two fronts and thus ill adapted to conquest. Only a strong Army could settle the danger of a war on two fronts. If one substitutes Navy for Army, one has the present situation of North America. To Bismarck, overseas acquisitions and a large Navy at the time seemed dangerous, since German talents did not lie in this direction and Britain would never concede naval equality to the strongest military power. Alliances with Russia and Austria, friendship with France, little or no rivalry in foreign continents—these seemed to him to be the best guarantees for the security of the Reich. For this reason, he at first lent no support at all to colonial aspirations; even later his support was limited; Karl Peters, Lüderitz and Wörmann were the pioneers in this field. Not until the middle 'eighties did he sanction and himself undertake a cautious colonial policy.

Thus for twenty years Bismarck's foreign policy never took on an imperialist character—rather, the contrary.

On the domestic scene, however, Bismarck lacked understanding of the people and the times. He now rued the universal franchise, characterizing his granting of this right as the greatest blunder of his life and seeking to kill it off by withdrawing it from all but a few hundred thousand voters. By means of three great Reich laws he sought to take the wind out of the sails of Socialist propaganda. He introduced health, accident and old-age insurance systems that were compulsory, protecting the worker against the whims of his employer. These were highly original reforms, later adopted in modified form in virtually all countries—their basic principles have been adopted in the United States only now, after some fifty years.



At the same time, and even earlier, he enacted emergency legislation against the Socialists on the pretext of the plots that have been mentioned, suppressed thirteen hundred newspapers and magazines, banished nine hundred labour leaders from the country, put fifteen hundred of them behind prison bars, creating as much misery among the families of these leaders as he did hatred among the masses. The fact that he appeared at once as a dictator and as a reformer was typically German, for he sought to combine social justice with violence, and even in the homeland of authority he strove for a kind of moral alibi. His actions served as a model to a hundred changing Governments in Europe and ultimately even to his successors in our own day—as though parties could be suppressed, opinions punished, thoughts prevented.

No wonder that he ultimately fell, because of this, into his greatest blunder

## 18

“BISMARCK made Germany great, the Germans small,” wrote one of his ambassadors, expressing a striking truth about both Bismarck and the German character.

For after the unification of the Reich, in the 'seventies and 'eighties of the last century, the Germans found themselves in the situation of newly rich people who, after a long period of failure and straitened circumstances, suddenly, by the favour of circumstance rather than their own merits, wake up surrounded by millions. All their hard work, their constant striving, their restless vitality had brought them outside recognition only as individuals, not as German citizens. As a member of his nation, the German citizen was never able to be proud of his fatherland—hence the unanimous resignation of his intellectual leaders. When there was still a powerful German Reich, up to the Thirty Years' War, it had been the nobleman rather than the commoner who was its support. When the commoner rose, the Reich fell into decay and its individual parts, moreover, remained in the hands of the princes and Junkers. At the beginning of the century fathers and sons had shed their blood in vain to win liberation. After the struggle they were not given the rights that had been promised them. The first pseudo-Constitutions merely added insult to injury. They did not find the strength to rise in rebellion and when they did try to do so on one occasion they found themselves quickly defeated.

But now, in 1871, the Reich had not only been unified anew almost overnight ; its brilliant victories over the famous Army of France had at the same time made it feared. At this moment the Germans for the first time, by means of a just and modern electoral law, gained the opportunity to take part in their government. True, it had been the people who had donned the uniform to win this right in struggle ; but the people were not prepared for it except in a few places and for a few years. The glory that radiated abroad from unity and empire, the wealth of new enterprise, the respect of foreign lands—all this seemed to be due solely to a show of arms ; and so it was in truth.

A class that had always governed and commanded—such a class necessarily inspired the people to reverence and emulation, now that they began to penetrate this very class. Under Frederic the Great every lieutenant had been a Junker, and even in the Wars of Liberation at least every general ; but now universal military service and the spirit of the times had during Bismarck's three wars admitted the commoner to this closed caste. The result was a rise in national self-assurance that could hardly have taken place without certain natural repercussions.

But it so happened that these events hit upon an unbalanced character, releasing that sudden arrogance behind which a soldier of fortune, suddenly cast up on top of the heap, hides his embarrassment. With their first world-successes after centuries of national dismemberment, the Germans began to show their most unpleasant side to the world ; indeed, they appeared more conceited than they actually were, in the beginning. But when this arrogance had been frozen into a fixed attitude through one or two generations, when the new German was already creating a painful impression on the outside world, the Germans felt even more injured, complaining about the world's failure to recognize them and working up that arrogance and smugness that even to-day entirely obscures their virtues and more and more violently arouses the world's antipathy.

The shrewdest observers soon recognized the inner reasons. Nietzsche, who except for Goethe thought most profoundly about the Germans, described the new German as early as the 'seventies in these lines :

One searches in vain all over Europe for more repulsive tones. The voice has a cold indifference, a careless mockery—to the Germans that sounds refined now, and I can hear the valiant effort at such refinement in the voices of young officials, of teachers, women and business men ; indeed, the little girls imitate this officers' German, for it is the officer—the Prussian officer—who is the inventor of these sounds—that same officer who as a soldier, an expert at his trade, possesses

that admirable tact of modesty from which all Germans might learn, including even German professors and composers. But as soon as the German officer speaks and moves he is the most immodest and jarring figure in ancient Europe—quite unconsciously, no doubt. Not even the better type of German is aware of this, for he admires the officer as a leader who sets the tone in society—a tone only too readily followed.

And that is what actually happened ! First it is the corporals and sergeants who imitate and coarsen that tone. Listen to the barking commands that virtually encircle the German city, now that there is drilling outside every gate. What arrogance, what furious sense of authority, what cold mockery sounds from this bellowing !

Are the Germans really a musical nation ? As far as the sound of their voices is concerned, there can be no doubt that it is growing more and more military ; and once they are inured to speak in military tones it is probable that in the end they will also write in military accents. For habituation to certain sounds reaches deeply into the character ; one soon finds the words and phrases and finally even the thoughts that fit such sounds.

The new ambition of the awakening citizen could only injure the German spirit, for the very reason that education through the centuries had achieved no balance between the State and the spirit. The old law that these two must hinder rather than support each other led to a decline in German genius even in the era of Bismarck with all its power.

The great thinkers and creative artists of the century all flourished before the unification of the Reich. The art of painting, which had produced such great masters in the sixteenth century, showed a great gap for three centuries. The leadership had long since passed to France. Of the three or four painters who stood out in the nineteenth century, only Menzel retained certain ties to the land through his pictures depicting the era of Frederic the Great. Marées, Feuerbach and Böcklin resumed the old pilgrimages to Rome, deriving their work for the most part from Italy. Hardly one of the sculptors and architects of the century exerted any effect beyond his own country and time.

The new Reich followed on the heels of a period of philosophy and of music, but ignored both. Schopenhauer wrote his two most important works as a young man between 1810 and 1820, just when Bismarck was born ; but unfortunately his place in German history is questionable—his grandparents were Dutch and his parents' hatred of the Prussians was so profound that they left the city of Danzig with their five-year-old son when it became Prussian. Yet Schopenhauer's language and education were pure German and his destiny was deeply influenced by the fact that

his literary mother spent her declining years in Weimar, where the son was decisively stimulated by Goethe. He and his mortal enemy, Hegel, simultaneously conquered the world in two different directions and even to-day determine whole series of thoughts—proof of the wealth of the German spirit. More than any other, the philosophies of these two Germans and of Nietzsche opened up important new paths in the nineteenth century.

For a while Hegel gave the basis for a new social order and to-day appears as the grandfather both of Fascism and of Communism, as Schopenhauer was the founder of philosophy as an art. The one wrote in a German that is hard to read, the other in more beautiful German than any German thinker before him had used. After the manner of Goethe, Schopenhauer combined innate intuition with study of detail, the creative element with the scientific element, faith with knowledge. At the same time his internationalism, encouraged by a wise father through travel and languages, placed him beyond all national limitations, making him more at home in Athens, London and the foothills of the Himalayas than in Frankfort, where he lived for thirty years, almost unknown. For this reason he thought about the Germans as did Goethe and all the others ; and he wrote of them : " Efficient, obvious, kicked by their Government. . . . How great, by comparison, is the dignity of the Frenchmen with their incorruptible empiricism and their efforts limited to learning from nature and exploring its course rather than prescribing its laws. What good fortune to be born into such a nation ! "

The three great composers after Beethoven : an Austrian, a Saxon and a Jew—they too created their work long before Bismarck, in the time of German disintegration. All three died young and all three had nothing to do with the State but a great deal with the Germans.

Weber, descended from a mountebank, a self-styled nobleman, presented the Germans with great gifts in his romantic operas such as no one before him has offered, nor anyone since. Never again has a German composer poured into such sweet and at the same time such virile tones the deep-rooted romanticism in the German heart, with its woods and elves, its water spirits and sorcerers, its moonlight and its Puckish humour ; for all of Mozart's operas were set against a Mediterranean background. If all German culture were buried and nothing were left but Weber's three overtures and the " Invitation to the Dance," the discoverers a few thousand years hence would be bound to conclude that this lost people must have been enchanting.

Schumann too, whom the French almost regard as one of their own,

is in truth wholly German, as he shows by the very texts of his songs. In this field particularly, especially with Eichendorff's poetry, he has tones that are as alien to other nations as Arabian music is to Europeans. He shares with Weber the German forest, the hunt and the horn and much else ; but at bottom he is more melancholy, lacking the rapid heart-beat that impelled the tubercular Weber. To call him the last disciple of Beethoven is to do an injustice to both ; and yet, he is well encompassed by the comparison with his predecessor and his successor, Beethoven and Brahms.

Mendelssohn, this fairy prince of the realm of music and for that very reason regarded with distrust by the experts, brought the crossing of the German and the Jewish spirit to its finest perfection, more successfully even than Spinoza and Heine. He was a grandson of the philosopher, and he was educated in the scintillating home of his father which around 1820 was the meeting-place for all the best minds and the most interesting women of Berlin. He embarked upon his artistic career with effortless ease, touring the capitals of Europe first as a child prodigy, then as a pianist and composer. He was happier than Mozart. At the age of thirteen, at Goethe's house, he read and played an almost illegible manuscript of Beethoven's ; and a few years later he skilfully played the part of the boy David, cheering the octogenarian Goethe, who was seized by profound melancholy, with his piano playing. These were great moments in German history, for in those hours Goethe and Beethoven were at one with the young conqueror from the Mediterranean, and all were entwined by the German spirit.

When Mendelssohn as a seventeen-year-old student wrote the " Overture to the Midsummer Night's Dream " one of the sprites must have impishly insinuated itself into his mind, and one of the elves into his heart. For in those strains this Jewish lad played with the same spirits of the water and the air that in these very months inspired the German Weber in the composing of his Oberon from the same theme. It must have been the fact that their ancestors had lived here ; it must have been the elements, the very essence of the land that lent both of them the wings on which they simultaneously rose to the selfsame German music—so much so that on occasions they are readily confused with each other. The rise of the new Reich added nothing to the music growing up in its realm. Brahms was born in its outermost corner, the Hanseatic city of Hamburg. But like Bruckner, the Austrian schoolmaster's son, he lived far from the new Reich in Vienna and all his life felt that he belonged to the South, a stranger to all that the Reich meant.

In the Reich itself flat materialism ranged far and wide. A few scholars stand out, but even their period of flowering—the Bunsens and Kirchhoffs, the Helmholtzes and Virchows—was already past. Bismarck knew not a single one of those who then were conspicuous in Berlin by their intellectual powers. Nor did the best contemporary writers ever see Bismarck—neither Keller nor Fontane, the latter half an alien, descended from Huguenots, who has yet left the finest description of the Prussian Junker. Grillparzer and Hebbel lived in hostile aloofness in Vienna. Keller and Burckhardt, both of them Swiss, hated the Prussian tone with equal bitterness; and Burckhardt, the greatest historian in the German language, predicted the fall of the new Empire at the very time of its flowering.

The house of the most powerful German was emptier of spirit than even the Berlin Court, though he himself was a man of far broader culture than the Kings and court; and this merely serves to emphasize Bismarck's hatred of men, which hardened more and more with age. His thirst for power was so fanatical that he at first lacked the time, and then when he had time, the mood, to read or hear anything not connected with politics. At bottom he hated all the world and loved only the trees, the animals and his wife. Thus he, who formerly lived so much with Beethoven, banished music because it excited him too much.

Of the two decisive spirits of his epoch, Bismarck did not know the one, while he detested the other. They were Nietzsche and Wagner.

## 19

AMONG all creative Germans, Richard Wagner (1813-1883) was the most dangerous. It is he who contributed most to the confusion of the present day; indeed, he is the real father of present-day German sentiments. It is Wagner who must bear the responsibility for all that the world attributes to Nietzsche in condemning the present German system. Nor is it an accident that the Führer is a Wagnerian. The outside world did not understand that, and France actually welcomed Wagner's operas, and with them the German danger, into its own country. The non-German countries paid attention only to the music and did not grasp the symbolism of the subject-matter and the texts. And that is true down to the present day.

Independent of nation and State, Wagner's musical achievements remain immortal. In orchestration and in harmony he discovered new provinces, pointing the way for an entire generation. He found and invented colours and subtleties no one knew before him and no one can forget after him. At the same time he derived effects from the theatre that were unknown before him.

But beyond that, the thing that Wagner preached and strove for in his own work—the thing he sought to dignify with the un-German term *Gesamtkunstwerk* ("work of total art")—has already been abandoned. So far Wagner is but an interesting case of a pathological genius in the history of art, where he will perhaps figure in the neighbourhood of Bernini or Edgar Allan Poe.

Wagner's passion ran toward making an impression upon the masses—the German masses. In his ten prose volumes he strove for a deep educational effect in the sense of the ancient tragedy, an effect he himself sought to attain with his later operas. And thus anyone who approaches him solely as a musician insults him. He had no intention of figuring in the chain of German composers, nor did he know how profoundly the nature of his talents served to isolate him. He is remote not only from the seven great masters, but from the romanticists, while his great contemporary, Brahms, passed him by. But what came after him was so far beneath him that it merely served to prove his own creative genius. In the theatre, on the other hand, he fits in as a successor of Gluck and Weber, becoming a leader for all who followed him.

For the theatre is an illusion of reality, and that is the slogan that embraces all the virtues and dangers of Wagner. He was the first to discover and exploit the actor in the German, and, since he possessed powers of suggestion unlike anyone before him, he was able to develop this German disposition to full flower. He almost never offered the pure wine of music, but always an intoxicating mixture of wines, and thus he quickly pleased all those who knew nothing of wine. He attracted those nations that are less musical even earlier than the Germans, and everywhere the first circles he enchanted were those who had nothing to do with pure music. Wagner's music alone is so easy because it has so many approaches—because it works upon the nervous system; and his operas are easily accepted because the eye may see if the ear grows bored. Every child, moreover, can enjoy the foreknowledge that when a certain theme sounds the singer in question will immediately leap from the wings. Even those who can remember no aria of Mozart, and no variation from a Beethoven quartet, can readily follow the so-called "everlasting

melody," because it enlivens the everlasting lack of melody with words. The one-third circus and the one-third revue that are incorporated in each of these operas are sufficient to make an absent-minded public accept the musical third.

"This genius of German obfuscation," as Nietzsche called him, was overwhelmed by such an urge for self-assertion that he made his weaknesses into a system; and since he was weak as a melodic but strong as a symphonic composer, he derided the "repertory numbers" of the old opera which he could furnish himself. Because he himself was a little man obsessed by sex, he rendered the Teutonic gods and heroes as sexual giants. Because according to his own confession he spent his life in a state of spasm between ecstasy and defeat and, to use his own words, had to "screw himself up" with extreme effort to feel anything like happiness, he transmogrified the knights and women of German legend into nervous men and women of his own kind and time, making them interesting to his listeners as characters that were akin to theirs.

And where did he find his audiences? Wagner never won over the German élite—nor, for that matter, did he win the favour of the German masses. The best German creative artists and discoverers of his time were arrayed against him, and it was only the literary figures of France, then in a state of decadence, that waxed lyrical over him. The musical German people, on the other hand, continued, during and after Wagner's epoch, to cling to German song, to church and chamber music. They hold to this allegiance, even to-day. Of Wagner's work they have at best accepted the first three romantic operas, for these remind them of Weber. When the contention and the vogue were over, it was neither the intellectuals, nor the composers, nor the people who filled the opera houses. The later operas that really counted in Wagner's own eyes never attracted the Germans as do "Figaro," "The Magic Flute" or the "Freischütz." Wagner's public consists of the petty-bourgeois. Here we see the kinship to Hitler's appeal, which likewise rests upon the bourgeoisie. The personalities of the two men further resemble each other in that both, Wagner and Hitler, are true fanatics and at the same time cunning actors. All the attempts, by the way, to represent Wagner as a half-Jew have lacked the weight of evidence and must be emphatically rejected.

All the inchoate yearning without clarity, ambition without security, in the German character—accumulated in the river-bed of the last two centuries, stirred up occasionally by violent storms—deeply affected Wagner, himself a German bourgeois. Even Luther had had these



convulsive states, and Hitler has them again ; indeed, in both they seem to express themselves pathologically. Wagner retained control over himself because as a composer and actor he found the means for projecting his convulsions. In Luther it had been the desire for faith which he sought to invoke in prayer by sheer force ; Wagner's life was determined by the yearning for salvation which he transferred to his heroes and especially to his heroines. If the mysteries of an artist's soul are revealed by the kind of women he creates, Wagner's women, in part sultry, in part savage, and always on heat, would alone suffice to interpret his inner world.

Wagner was able to attain inner harmony no more than Luther or Frederic the Great ; that is why all three of them are much more popular among the Germans than Goethe. For the German feels at home only beneath an incomplete arch ; he loves fragments, particularly in his own life. In its highest form this quality leads to Faust, in its lowest to Alberich and Titurel.

At the same time, what Wagner simultaneously arouses in the German bourgeois is sexual stimulation of the nerves and the ecstasy of the power instinct. No wonder Wagner was constantly addressing letters to Bismarck and that the " Ring of the Nibelung " came into being at the same time as the German Reich. Since Wagner accepted every conviction that promised him success, abjuring all that impeded him, since he changed from revolutionary to friend of kings, from anti-German to patriot, from hedonist to pessimist, he was the only German artist of his time who was ready to identify himself with Bismarck and the new Reich, as he actually did in a formal way.

In order to express his personality in words and in music Wagner was compelled to distort German legend. Now Germans are not aware of this, and Germans often even do not recognize it until they see Hebbel's great Nibelungen dramatization performed on the stage. It was a question of exaggerating all the incest, and the breaches of faith and the personal violence, with which legend is filled, of expressing them in music and dragging out by means of shouts and curses what took but a few tragic bars in " Fidelio " and " Don Giovanni." As far as ideals are concerned, all he had to do was to take German legend as he found it. It is filled with lust for power, inspired by treachery and sex. Thus in Wagner, the German audience saw brutality mingled with innocence, and it felt the thrust.

The most important work, the " Ring of the Nibelung," is determined by the will to world dominion which is expressed by four different

themes alone. Diabolically mingling these themes with those of salvation, and spreading over them for minutes at a time an impenetrable mist of music, Wagner now only had to do violence to the German language in order to transport the listener into a state of mystical ecstasy. No non-German can understand how this happens, for he is served up the Wagnerian text in tolerably reasonable translation.

Of all those who have outraged this magnificent language no other has reached such a degree of distortion. The German poets and writers laughed Wagner to scorn and parodied him, but the burgher grew ecstatic because in his German way he sensed a depth beneath the incomprehensible that he invariably prefers to clarity. The alliteration with which Wagner sought to hide his lyrical impotence is often as ludicrous as his pathos where he seeks to rise to the purest lyrical height, such as in Walter's "*Morgentraumdeutweise*" of "The Meistersingers." It is no insult to Wagner, by the way, to compare his prose with that of Hitler.

Youth was seduced. During the long monologues, at the beginning of the "*Walküre*," there is time to pay attention to the stage props; and upon young Germans a sword, lodged in the trunk of an ash-tree, that is sung over for five minutes, then illuminated from above and finally extracted by the hero to the accompaniment of radiant C-major chords—such a symbol has the effect of a dagger or revolver consecrated to honour. All the theatrical instincts of the new German type, all the tricks of pageantry—the processions, the banners, the fanfare of to-day—have their models in Wagner's work, from Lohengrin to the Knights of the Holy Grail.

And now to these tempting visions of world dominion, of sensually dreaming virgins, of Valkyries yielding to virile force, of neighing horses and fiery pinnacles, of gold and swords and blood, there is added as the final blandishment the tragic ending that completes the appeal to the German mind. That the gods not only appear in the flesh but in the end fade into the twilight, that the heroes ultimately perish of the convulsions of their souls—all that flutters the romantic German glorification of death. If even heroes and gods must suffer, their own destiny, so they conclude, must in all likelihood be in order.

Wagner was for ever using action and words as a network upon which to weave his music. Apart from the preludes and the Siegfried Idyll, he never produced a piece of genuine, that is to say, of wordless music; nor did he leave anything but forty-eight very beautiful and incidentally unpublished bars which he placed into the "*Parsifal*" score as a farewell to his wife. He was tired at the time—and truly, he had a right to be.

Wholly the actor, he constantly needed a mirror, even if it were only words that constituted this mirror. Wholly the theatrical director, he constantly needed the suggestion of a festival stage, of a jubilee year, of an unprecedented event. Not only on his stage but also by his mastery of a form of ballyhoo then entirely new, he set the example which the present rulers of Germany were able to enlarge a thousandfold with the means of power at their disposal. Above all, it is Wagner's tireless insistence in reiterating a theme again and again that Hitler has applied in his speeches and recommended in his book as the best means of making anything credible in the end, even a lie.

At no time did Wagner represent a menace to musical Germany. He fought against Meyerbeer with only partial success, and against Brahms without any success whatever. On the other hand, he enriched musical Germany to a considerable degree. His rediscovery of Beethoven and Weber and the novelty of his orchestrations and voice formations reacted upon the performance of all earlier works. Like every revolution, all the agitation and ado with Liszt, Bülow and Cosima brought a hundred fresh stimulations into musical life.

But beyond the realm of music he poisoned national life—that is to say, he confirmed it in its weaknesses—by his abuse of German legend, his tendency toward vengeance, violence and world dominion, his glorification of the neurotic, his representation of sensuality, his convulsions and his constant cry for salvation. He was strong enough to paralyse the creative life of an entire generation, until the magic vanished about 1910.<sup>1</sup> He was strong enough to reach a much lower and broader section of the next generation that came to hear him more indirectly, through concerts, marches or recitations, through illustrations or the use of names, through the renewal of a Teutonic religion that became known again only through the impact of Wagner's themes upon the ear and the impact of his dramatic scenes upon the eye. When General Ludendorff founded a new Teutonic paganism, he had probably never read the original sources but taken over everything from "Rheingold" and "Gotterdammerung."

Brahms, on the other hand, whose creative period overlapped that of Wagner, represented the other Germany anew. He was not born in Prussia but in the free Hanseatic city of Hamburg, though, like Beethoven, who was for ever his ideal, he left his native city at an early age—from his late twenties on, Vienna was almost his exclusive residence.

<sup>1</sup> The present author dealt with this problem as early as 1913 in his book *Wagner, or the Disenchanted*.

All the same, Brahms' northern heritage deeply pervades his music. It is the sea that surges through all his harmonies—the northern sea with its long, heavy breakers. This thoroughly German composer reminds one that Germany too opens on the sea.

Brahms was the last to master all the forms of absolute music. On the one hand he carried on the tradition of Beethoven, on the other that of Schumann. He was the last one to preserve the great line, never falling under the spell of Wagner, his far more successful contemporary—a spell to which César Franck succumbed. True, this stamps Brahms as a lesser figure—an executor rather than an initiator; he was an ending point in music, while Wagner marked a beginning.

During the years when in Bayreuth absolute music, German legend and good taste were burned on the gigantic pyre of this *Götterdämmerung*, producing much pungent smoke, two airy transparent flames leaped up in Paris and Vienna, kindled by two other German composers.

Offenbach can be called only one-quarter German, for he was born a Jew and received most of his education in Paris. Johann Strauss on the other hand was by descent more certainly a German than Wagner, on the subject of whose illegitimate father there is no authentic knowledge.

Those who would have dared at the time to predict for Strauss's operettas any extended period of life would have been laughed to scorn by the tragically pompous Wagnerians. And yet in the "*Fledermaus*" the German character crystallizes as symbolically as in "*Tannhäuser*"; there is even one point in which they may be compared. Listening to the bacchanalia in the first act of "*Tannhäuser*" and then to the bacchanalia in the second act of the "*Fledermaus*," one finds the same festive erotic mood expressed by two symphonic choruses in a similarly dreamy way. True, the satyrs and nymphs in the *Venus Mountain* are able to express their sexual urges more freely than ladies and gentlemen were permitted on the occasion of a Viennese ball. Yet the theme is the same—dancing and music to increase desire, the intoxication of a hundred couples, drunk with love.

Both forms of love choirs were new to the world when it received them from the Germans. To this day both continue their effect upon opera houses, the waltzes upon the ballroom too, and both stimulate every healthy listener, stirring his emotions. But the effect of this sensual music can be very different on different types of the German character. The sultry North German feels himself excited by the fortissimos of the *Venus Mountain*, particularly the Paris version, the easy-going South German feels himself encouraged to tenderness. The barbaric type of

German imagines love to be either a Teutonic act of violence such as that upon the virgin Brunhild, or as voluptuousness in the hothouse of Venus. The subtlety of Strauss's love rhythms was opposed to Wagner's dynamic sexuality. Both traditions existed in Germany, achieving perfection at the same time, conquering the world and remaining unexcelled for almost a century.

Strauss, whose father in Vienna had followed in the footsteps of Schubert, enchanted the world; Wagner excited it dangerously. The one, whose music seemed confined to society, carried a piece of Germany into the world, making all men smile to his music; the other led the way back to the barbarism of the ancient Teutons.

## 20

NIETZSCHE'S beacon light, guarding the century from the outermost shore, faces Goethe's on the other end of the shore, delimiting the German territory. No one else looms so high, no one else can send the beam of his rotating searchlight so far across the sea. Nietzsche (1844-1900), the spirit who countered Wagner, made his mark later and more slowly, for he is not easily grasped with the eyes and ears, only with the thoughts. He is immortal not by that which he creates, but by that which he thinks.

Nietzsche will survive all those that to-day imagine themselves to be scions of Germany's power. And yet we must here put him in a company he does not deserve; for all the world makes him responsible for that which is happening before our eyes. It is self-defence that compels us to defend a great spirit against the present and to quote him directly and at length.

Hitler's movement owes much more to Nietzsche than he is minded to give it. All that is to-day called "the morality of the master": the superman, the breeding of a higher race, the training of an élite, the discarding of sick organisms—all this is to be found in Nietzsche, and is the object also of Nazi aspiration. Both schools are eugenic, anti-Christian and anti-democratic. Yet what separates the two is the application of these theories to the Germans, particularly to the Germans of to-day; what separates them is the method, and the denial of the spirit; what separates them is the barbarian.

Since Nietzsche died a generation before his present-day disciples

proclaimed him, we can but indirectly prove his repudiation of Nazidom. His discussions about the Germans and about race, his whole attitude, was directed against the new Reich.

Nietzsche, the romanticist, the philosopher, the historian, found many of his theories in existence—from Machiavelli to Gobineau—but in the magnificent clarity of his mind and his style he opened them up anew. He was in the prime of his youth, around thirty, when he witnessed the founding of the Reich, the victory and union of his fatherland; what could be more plausible than to greet this as a dream come true, or at least as an approach to it?

Yet he turned away with revulsion from everything that then happened in his country, for instead of the spirit he saw the uniform omnipotent. The same man who, like Goethe, had grown enthusiastic over Napoleon and reproached the Germans for having destroyed Napoleon's concept of Europe, rejected Bismarck, and especially the Germans under Bismarck.

"What enemies," he wrote in December 1870, "now grow from the bloody soil of this war for our faith! In this respect I am prepared for the worst, though at the same time I am confident that under this excess of suffering and terror here and there the nightflower of knowledge will spring into bloom." And a little later he wrote: "I no longer have any respect for this Germany, no matter how many weapons it points outward, like a porcupine. It represents the most stupid and mendacious form of the German spirit. . . . I shall forgive no one who makes a compromise with it."

If Nietzsche harboured such hostile sentiments toward a new Reich which he justly reproached with its denial of the spirit, how indignant would he have been over a society whose leaders expressly exclude the spirit, who proudly call themselves barbarians, and who mow down justice with a scythe, where Bismarck barely pulled a few leaves of grass!

But let us listen to Nietzsche discoursing generally on the subject of Germans who to-day derive their right to power from him. The problems of Germany and of race were among those on which he did not change his mind for twenty years. All German thinkers wrote more critically about their fatherland than we find to be the case with other countries; but Nietzsche exceeded all of them in acuteness and clarity, expressing himself even more bitterly than Goethe, because the material success of his German contemporaries provoked him even more to opposition. Here are but a few of hundreds of quotations:

When I imagine the kind of man that runs counter to all my instincts, it always turns out to be a German. I cannot abide this race with whom one is always in

bad company, that has no sense for nuances. The Germans lack all concept of their own viciousness—and that is the ultimate in viciousness. . . . Why should there be a Germany at all, I ask, unless it desires, stands for, represents something that has more value than any other power on earth? . . . In the presence of North Germans I feel that I am in the black continent where the slaves are still waiting to be liberated. . . . A definition of the Teutons: Obedience and long legs. . . .

The work of the Germans has always been in vain. The Reformation, Leibnitz, Kant and the so-called German philosophy, the wars of liberation, the Reich—each time a vain struggle for something that already existed or that could not be brought back. They are my enemies, I admit it, these Germans. I despise in them every form of uncleanness in concept and value, of cowardice before every outspoken yes and no. For a thousand years they have confused and entangled almost everything their fingers have touched. . . .

Whoever lives among the Germans must count himself fortunate to find one of them who holds aloof from that idealistic self-deception and colour-blindness the Germans love and almost worship as a virtue. . . . Good-natured, incontinent in small pleasures, lecherous in their dreams, desirous of being able to discard their innate sobriety and submission to duty at least in the theatre, submissive to those above, envious of each other, yet deep inside self-satisfied. . . . The Germans are a dangerous people—they understand the art of intoxication. . . . All true Teutons went abroad. The present Germany is at a pre-Slav stage and is preparing the way for a Pan-Slav Europe.

Is this enough prophecy at the end of an apocalypse? But there is still the race theory that Nietzsche is supposed to have invented. If Nietzsche did indeed detest the Germans, is there no passage where he at least praised the purity of race?

How much mendacity and dull-wittedness it takes to insist on questions of race in present-day Europe with its mixture of races—always supposing one does not trace one's descent to Borneo. . . . Wherever races are mixed, that is where one finds the source of good cultures. Maxim: Never have anything to do with a man who takes part in this mendacious race illusion. . . . As a nation in which races are mixed and stirred up to the greatest extent imaginable, possibly even with a preponderance of pre-Aryan elements, as a "people of the middle" in every sense, the Germans are more incomprehensible, contradictory, incalculable, surprising, indeed, terrifying than any other nation is to itself. They escape definition and thereby alone are the despair of the French. . . . Foreigners are amazed and attracted by the mysteries which the basically contradictory nature of the German soul offer them. Good-natured and vicious—a juxtaposition that is contradictory in reference to every other nation. . . . German

profundity often is no more than a halting process of digestion. And as all who are chronically ill, all dyspeptics, tend toward comfort, the Germans too love "frankness" and "simplicity." How convenient it is to be frank and simple!

These are Nietzsche's thoughts about the Germans and about races. True, with such ideas and sentiments he is near neither Bismarck nor Wagner. He tried to adjust himself to Wagner at first; indeed, Wagner called him the only one who entirely understood him; and Nietzsche's turn away from Wagner long antedates his illness—it took place in the years of his brightest reason. He called Wagner a disease one has to overcome, nor was he referring to himself alone but to the Germans. His whole struggle with Wagner was a struggle against the Germans.

Since it is claimed that Nietzsche was an anti-Semite, we cite the following passages:

To encounter a Jew is a pleasure, especially when one lives among Germans. . . . The Jews are beyond all doubt the strongest, toughest and purest race now living in Europe. . . . That the Jews, should they so desire, could even now have the preponderance, indeed mastery, in Europe, is an obvious fact; that they do not work and plan toward that end is similarly obvious. . . . The fight against the Jews has always been the mark of those who are inferior, envious and cowardly; and whoever now takes part in it must carry within him a good bit of the mob-spirit. . . . Now that they are year after year inexorably marrying into Europe's best nobility, they will soon have come into a fine heritage of spirit and body. A hundred years from now they will look aristocratic enough not to cause their inferiors to blush with shame at them as masters. . . . Then they will be called the inventors and pathfinders among the Europeans.

True, Nietzsche too was a German in the noblest sense—that is to say, a romanticist who could think, and a philosopher who could make music. What separated him from Wagner was his clarity and inner security, his freedom from pretence, his perfect equilibrium—all features derived from the Mediterranean where this great German too saw the homeland of his soul.

Of Bismarck, Nietzsche gained but a partial picture, since at the time none of Bismarck's personal papers had been published. Actually he might have found in Bismarck what Machiavelli found in Cesare Borgia. Was not Bismarck a dictator? Was he not sufficiently forceful, clear in reasoning, an enemy of the people? Nietzsche saw only those effects of Bismarck's work that denied the spirit; what he himself rejected was precisely the idea of the Germans as bearers of a world-historical mission. No German thinker ever wished them world dominion or thought them



capable of it, not even Bismarck. One must be a fanatic without intellect—one must be a Hitler to believe in such a thing.

Nietzsche and Bismarck disappeared from the scene almost simultaneously, the one ill, the other one dismissed from office ; and both of them died about a decade later. For the time being, both of them remained without disciples. Had Bismarck grown rather than declined in his old age, he might have attracted Nietzsche's thoughts more strongly to himself. It is a typically German episode that the two most interesting Germans of their time did not know each other, since the one belonged to the State, the other to the spirit, and these forces in Germany do not encounter each other, at best regarding each other through a glass wall.

Nietzsche, the greatest stylist of the century, was the fourth one—coming after Walther von der Vogelweide, Luther and Goethe—to regenerate the German language, introducing in the process a Latin diction that is to Goethe's as Roman letters are to German. He was equally at home in the mountains and on the sea, like the sea eagle ; indeed, he required both to wing his way up to the heights and attain the full voice of his song. He soared over the century, and in the pure heights he flew into the new one.

## 21

BISMARCK'S end was but a conclusion of what had gone before. He would have been of lesser stature had he been called from office by illness and death. Actually two entirely different forces combined their symbolism to overthrow him—the ruler from above and part of the people from below.

In the last decade of his rule he had become a complete misanthrope, distrusting his oldest friends and in later years permitting only the American Motley to continue as his friend—a man he had selected when he was still a student. For no reason whatever he foiled his son's plan for a love match, marrying him to a Bohemian countess, the granddaughter of an American Jew. Thus in his old age he practised those precepts he had earlier voiced in favour of the intermarriage between German noblemen with Jewish women. Bismarck's family, nevertheless, rapidly degenerated. His cynicism was boundless. No one has ever discovered

whether he really loved Germany ; at any rate, like his King, he always remained a Prussian.

He continued to suppress the Socialists. Along the eastern frontier he forced thousands of Poles to resettle. In every sense he practised dictatorship, despite the Reichstag and the Constitution. The only field in which he remained the master was that of diplomacy—he tolerated no attempt at world power and stifled all the germs of new wars. Not until his departure did so-called “ Imperialism ” break out.

As a dictator Bismarck was dependent upon his master, but even in the final decade this relationship had become a formal one by virtue of William's age ; for between the age of eighty and ninety a prince no more thinks of separating from his minister than a husband thinks of separating from his wife. That is why William's death at the age of ninety-one changed the situation. It was changed even more completely because his ailing son died after only a hundred days of reign. The new heir was twenty-eight years old.

Objectively speaking, William II (1888-1918) was not altogether in the wrong with his first step against Bismarck. Had he proved up to the mark later on, history might perhaps have praised him. But his later government showed him to be as hostile toward the people as his romantic predecessor, Frederic William IV, who at first had likewise taken a few halting steps in the direction of liberty. William too leaped into affairs of State with the frivolity of most crown princes, believing that he could solve the social question with a few amiable decrees. He decided to appease the German workers by flattery and promises. This necessarily served only to stiffen Bismarck's attitude. Bismarck intended to deprive the workers of the franchise under some pretext or by means of a *coup d'état*, to drive them into the streets in rebellion and then to have them shot down. The elections of February 1890 put both men in the wrong, for the pseudo-reforms of William and Bismarck's threats had the combined effect of increasing the Red vote to a million and a half, with thirty-five Deputies. It was the first great victory of the workers' party in the whole world.

William attributed the entire blame to Bismarck, of whom he had desired to get rid from the first day. Yet he dismissed him in so brutal a fashion that he did not even leave the man, who for twenty-eight years had governed first Prussia and then Germany, enough time to pack his things adequately. This served to change popular opinion. At bottom all the parties were glad when the great obstacle was finally rolled out of the way ; at the same time, however, they had a bad conscience, and

they revelled in a romantic idealization of him, now that he had been so brutally ejected from office.

Yet only a few of them were capable of realizing and grasping the complete upheaval in the foreign policy of the Reich brought about by Bismarck's dismissal. The upheaval during the March days of 1890 reconstituted the destiny of Germany for a long time to come ; indeed, it had a share in projecting the World War.

For twenty years Bismarck had seen his work menaced by Germany's geographic situation, and he had sought to safeguard the country by a system of alliances. In Austria an ancient resentment had risen again after her exclusion from the Reich. Revenge for Sadowa was a slogan of Austrian youth, and memories of Maria Theresa and Frederic merged with those of Metternich. There was no assurance of friendship with Austria, which now, united with Hungary, existed apart from Germany as the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy. And friendship would be a two-edged sword as well, for any ally of Austria now was also allied with eight different nations. The centrifugal influence of friendship with Austria might have a destructive effect upon the Poles, Danes and Alsatians who were included in the population of Germany.

France's circumstances seemed equally uncertain after the founding of the Third Republic ; for in France the idea of revenge made the ministers aspire to anti-German alliances. England, which actually never had any conflicts with Germany, was not easily encompassed by an alliance such as Bismarck suggested. As late as 1888 Bismarck had written to Lord Salisbury along these lines.

In this European insecurity there was but one pole of rest for Germany—that was the alliance with Russia. The friendship between the two nations was as traditional as that between their princes. The semi-serfdom of the Russian peasants, the complete lack of popular representation, were entirely to the liking of Bismarck, who preferred to deal with an independent Czar. Thus he had built up an artful system of treaties—the Tripartite Alliance with Austria and Italy, and at the same time the so-called Reinsurance Treaty with Russia. Bismarck called this a game with five balls.

And now there came the young Kaiser who wished to do everything differently, and, of course, better. In the final struggle between William and Bismarck, Bismarck had mortally offended the Kaiser by seeing to it that certain comments of the Czar's fell into William's hands—comments in which the Czar said that William was insane, malicious and uneducated. A few court bureaucrats, who had long been aiming at

Bismarck's downfall, the next day provided the Kaiser with certain obsolete reports in which there was talk of Russian troop movements along the border. At the same time the Russian minister Shuvalov had arrived in Berlin to renew the treaty between the two empires, which had just expired, not merely for the customary three years, but for six years, thereby transforming it into a permanent treaty. The Kaiser sought to justify his blow against Bismarck by a war danger that did not exist at all. The new flatterers reinforced everything that could be turned against Bismarck. The Kaiser stopped a renewal of the treaty, and demanded Bismarck's letter of resignation during the same days, thereby revenging himself on Bismarck as well as on the Czar.

From such motives, then as to-day, the destiny of nations is determined in empires and dictatorships, where everything is decided behind closed doors between two or three men. The world-historical consequences were felt immediately. The Czar suddenly felt himself isolated in Europe and concluded his first agreement with the French Republic one year later, in 1891, though he abhorred the French; and it was this treaty that led to the later Russian alliance with France.

The security of the German Reich was at an end. Henceforth, for two decades, the German General Staff had to prepare for the war on two fronts that Bismarck had prevented for two decades. Since there was not the slightest reason for not renewing the Russian alliance, it would certainly have continued had Bismarck remained, and Germany would have later had to fight on only one front, receiving Russian aid. In league with Russia it would in all likelihood have won the World War, and the Russian Revolution would not have broken out, or at least not at the time it did break out.

The young man who buried all these possibilities was confronted at the end of the nineteenth century with the question as to how much talent he would pour into his passion for ruling. The German Kaiser was still able to decide the question of war and peace free of any control, entirely as a dictator. Had he been a genius, now was the time he should have proved himself; had he been modest, he could, like his grandfather, have permitted another to govern.

Since, however, he was neither the one nor the other, but instead a nervous German character, a hysteric, always wanting to seem more than he was—since he was a man of this calibre, the German Reich, so painfully built up again, governed with such effort and caution, was destined to perish because of the whims and pretensions of its imperial master.

## Book V

# *Decline*

## From William II. to Hitler (1890-1940)

*"It may be a few centuries before  
enough spirit and higher culture  
has penetrated our compatriots . . .  
for anyone to be able to say of them  
that it is a long time since they were  
barbarians."*

—GOETHE

### 1

FOR forty years Europe enjoyed peace. Five great powers lived and worked side by side, sometimes as allies, sometimes as rivals, yet none deprived the others of the opportunity to develop. The term "great power," used as arbitrarily as when one speaks of "first-class hotels," also embraced a sixth power—Italy; but everyone knew that Italy did not represent a power of the same order as the others. Even among the great powers proper, two were of questionable standing despite their armies—Russia and Austria-Hungary. Both monarchies had been under the same dynasties for centuries, and those who knew regarded them as rotten—Russia because it was split along social lines, Austria because it was split along national lines. For everywhere the two demands of the new century strove in the same direction: equal rights for the poor—that is to say, the majority; and equal rights for minorities living under foreign rule.

The breaches of peace experienced in the period from 1871 to 1911 gave rise to not a single shot in Europe except for the half-Asiatic Russo-Turkish War. No house was set on fire nor was anyone killed in the

ancient motherland of culture. But two interruptions profoundly affected the inner situation. Toward the end of the century Britain fought in South Africa, with changing fortunes—for the first time demonstrating to the world how long a little peasant people could hold out in trackless territory against the mighty Empire. Millions of spectators throughout the world were prejudiced against her, since for a while she seemed to have taken over the rôle of the oppressor. Russia, which shortly afterwards fought the Japanese, lost even more prestige, because she was defeated in the end. Europe witnessed the rise of two new world powers—Japan and the United States—and at the beginning of the century it began to understand that henceforth wars were once more to become world wars as in the seventeenth century, though of far greater scope.

About 1910, world opinion about Europe had shifted. Britain's moral prestige had been restored by her willingness to concede important privileges to the defeated Boers. Russia's prestige had been restored by a first semblance of representative popular government, as well as by the Czar's unquestionably sincere peace proposals that had preceded the war and that continued to work in his favour during his reign. At the same time, world opinion turned away from Germany and toward France.

The principal motive was fear of the German giant; the second, resentment of his arrogance. Goethe seems to have had a presentiment of our own times when he wrote :

Whoever is compelled to live among Germans, suffers from the notorious drabness of their life and their senses, their formlessness, their dull and stolid wits, their obtuseness in intimate relationships, and even more from a certain envy and stealth in their character. . . . And now that this feverish unrest, this craving for success and profit, this over-esteem of the moment have been added as the worst evils, one is utterly outraged to think that all these ailments and weaknesses are never to be cured from the root, but only to be glossed over.

Perhaps nothing did so much harm to German prestige under William II as the manner of speech that became a habit with him and the German people, the faces they showed to the world on their travels, their shrill laughter, their cutting voices, their provocative jokes. Tourists used to visit Berlin with cold respect, Paris with friendly awe. In Berlin they found a hard-working people with the bustle and success of New York; in Paris they found a spirited, wealthy people grown soft—and they instinctively felt that things could not go on in this way. In

Germany the population was increasing ; in France it was declining. In Germany there was order and punctuality, in France both qualities were lacking. In Germany everyone obeyed ; in France no one obeyed. In Germany an awe-inspiring army was obviously preparing for some sort of attack ; in France a moderate army was preparing for defence. The German drama had reached the second act ; the French, the fourth act.

Who could have refused respect to a people that had so quickly developed into the world's second industrial country ? Who, except for the United States, could still keep pace with Germany's splendid organization ? When the industrialists of Essen came back from a visit to Manchester or the mine owners of Bochum from a tour of inspection in Wales they nudged each other over their Rhine wine in their fine villas, and said : " We can have it all our own way." How old-fashioned everything seemed in England—the machinery, the factories, the offices, to say nothing of the business theories ! These gentlemen sought to turn out solid, substantial merchandise, when to-day all depended on quick, light manufacture. When the term " Made in Germany " came into vogue, when German merchandise with English labels began to be sold in the British world, this was an event in German history similar to that when Japanese goods, in our own day, first penetrated into countries producing the same goods in much higher quality.

The Germans began to produce cheaply toward the end of the century, just as the Japanese did around 1930, because both paid lower wages to their workers than other nations, because their forms of organization were more efficient, saving millions in overhead, and because obedience was ingrained, the result of warlike traditions and training. True, the club with which the Prussian Soldier King of the 1700's had beaten his slave nation into Europe's finest army was no longer wielded in the Krupp Works in 1900 ; but it had fallen upon the backs of generations of ancestors, permanently banishing the love of liberty. The man who turned shells at the bench, tended the loom, or spent ten hours a day hacking out coal and loading it into his wooden barrow by the light of a small lamp—that man had previously spent three years as a soldier, had come to know every kind of beating and punishment without ever rebelling except perhaps through a powerless Deputy whose speeches of indictment quickly died away. Why was this so ?

Because the worker liked to play soldier just as much as did the commoner, the commoner just as much as the Junker. It was because all those Socialists, who on May Day pledged themselves to a programme

ultimately aimed at a republic, generally adored their sergeants and sometimes even their kings and colonels. The German worker never seriously desired a republic, which conveyed no meaning to him. Even though they did not like William, the Socialists in Baden said that if they must have a republic they would like to have their Grand Duke as president. The German Social Democrat, who could not even aspire to become a night watchman, loved his period of military service, as did the commoner, who could never become an officer of the Guards. His favourite songs were the old military marches which he sang over his beer with his comrades, reminiscing about his three years of uniformed splendour, now seen in a roseate haze. The most popular song among the German workers was not "The International" but a song with the refrain :

Youth comes back no more ;  
It was spent in the army corps !

Most Germans felt about their service years as did a former Chancellor of the German Reich, Brüning, who while in exile assured the present author that his war years had been the best time of his life. The German, inured through the centuries to service and suffering, feels at his best when he serves without undue suffering ; whenever he is required to act independently and responsibly, he feels unfree.

Even as the carrier of revolutionary thought, the German worker took over the obedience and order of his military years into the factory and the party. There too he strove to become a kind of sergeant, to be able to command at least a dozen people below in return for his obedience above. The German Social Democratic Party was the best organized in the world. It was numerically the strongest too—it had millions of voters, compared with barely a hundred thousand in France. In France the love of liberty is so deeply rooted in the souls of the people that it has made them anarchic—they can tolerate no permanent ties, not even those of a party with fixed meetings and dues. In Germany the predilection for the pyramid, which there typifies the State, crushes all love of liberty. The French workers made two revolutions within the space of a single century, yet they never managed to rally more than a trifling number of party members. The German workers, whose votes in twenty-five years rose from seven hundred and fifty thousand to four millions and a quarter, built up a giant party, but they failed as far as a revolution was concerned and permitted themselves in the end to be disarmed without resistance.

When the eyes of the world began to be focused on Germany, it was



the German character that made itself felt as a world danger. More and more, France had relinquished the thought of revenge, partly under the placating policy of Bismarck, partly because Napoleon's violent cure seemed to have exhausted the country for a century. During the last decade before the World War, the French schoolbooks offered a fair appraisal of the war of 1870. The mourning rites for the lost provinces ceased almost altogether—only those families that had emigrated from Alsace still cultivated the old hatred among their children. When France concluded the Entente with Britain in 1904, there was no thought whatever of a war of aggression. Those who present the situation in a different light misread the psychology of the French. The victory of Sedan, on the other hand, continued to be celebrated in German schools and universities from 1870 to 1917, for nearly half a century, to implant into youth the arrogance necessary for a new victory.

Only men without a sense of inner security are compelled to keep their eyes continually on the day of their triumph.

Similarly the attitude of the German sportsman is rarely governed by the free urge to play, but generally by jealousy of a better man or by a desire for outward recognition in the world. When in 1912 the best German runners and jumpers were beaten by two Americans in the Olympic Games, the Germans attributed the defeat to unequal conditions.

This insecurity, which causes the Germans to charge the world with malice whenever someone outdoes them, necessarily increased after the defeat in the World War. Before their first reappearance in the Olympic Games in 1928, the German committee wrote that it was not a mere question of matches and prizes, but that Germany, "which for fifty-two months had victoriously withstood the entire world," was entering the ring, "the German eagle leaving behind the pack of wolves." In Amsterdam, the Dutch hosts complained about the manners of the Germans, who conducted themselves like invaders. When the Germans were beaten by Uruguay at soccer, they at once accused the umpire, who was an Egyptian.

The manner in which the German character is reflected in the sportsman has been described by the German Count Harry Kessler in his memoirs. Kessler had been trained in boxing at Ascot, and at the age of sixteen he challenged a particularly bumptious German lad, knocking him out with a hook to the chin. "As he regained his feet with an effort, still half dazed, I approached him to shake hands. But he spat out at me, turned his back on me, and the other boys laughed at me for my silly chivalry." Reich Chancellor Bülow relates a similar episode. When

the son of the great Chamberlain delivered his maiden speech as a young member of the House of Commons, Gladstone, the Liberal and a deadly enemy of Chamberlain, rose to take the floor with a speech in which he expressed his gratification that the father's eminent gift seemed to have been handed down to the son. About the same time the son of Prince Bismarck delivered his maiden speech in the Berlin Reichstag. Eugene Richter, likewise a liberal and a deadly enemy of Bismarck, walked up to the rostrum and sought to disconcert the speaker by constant heckling. Prince Bülow and Count Kessler, both German noblemen, add that in these incidents they recognized the difference between the German and the British character.

## 2

DURING the quarter-century preceding the World War, the German people expressed their growing strength in three movements.

The workers had transferred their military discipline to the Social Democratic Party, paying dues, holding parades, singing songs, all exactly according to regulations. As early as 1912 they succeeded in becoming the strongest party in the Reichstag, with a delegation of one hundred and ten Deputies. These so-called "Reds" aroused the hatred and contempt of the rich, as was only natural; but almost all the intellectuals too held aloof from them, for it was fashionable *not* to be a Red. Even in the final decade of the Empire, the Reds accomplished but little. That they were unable to prevent the World War was not their fault but that of the disintegrating International. When they voted against army appropriations or the new fleet before the War, they generally had the entire bourgeoisie, which was of nationalist inclination, arrayed against them. To authorize soldiers and guns was quite natural to the Germans; to refuse them was unthinkable.

The almost imperceptible beginnings of pacifism found no echo in the souls of the German workers and peasants. Even Bebel had declared that he would shoulder a gun if Germany went against the Russians. He failed to recognize that no isolated Russo-German war was possible within the system of alliances. He saw only the bloody Czar and the crowds that were shot down in St. Petersburg on the occasion of the rebellion of 1905. The idea of deposing a Czar was stronger in him than the idea of deposing war. True, he was also influenced by general

notions of world revolution that might follow in the wake of a war on Russia. At any rate, such a phrase, uttered by a Socialist leader, made it easy for millions of workers to obey the innate German war spirit. The man who seeks to pick a fight is never at a loss for a moral pretext.

Ultimately the worker was always first a German and only then a worker. And thus even after the expiration of Bismarck's emergency laws the huge party of the German workers failed for twenty years to accomplish anything decisive. It was not even able to change Prussia's humiliating three-class franchise. At the time of Lassalle, the German Socialists had experienced a wonderful prelude to spring, followed by a spring proper of persecution and exile. But since there was no summer, the autumn remained without fruit.

From the German virtues of obedience and order there rose as the second movement the growth of industry. Not that the leaders of German industry showed more genius than those of other lands and thus outstripped their competition. But they felt like demigods, though they did not address one another by names such as Jupiter or Wotan, taking their titles instead from the gods of the military world—such as "*general-diktoren*" or "*wirtschafts-kapitän*." The devotion and discipline of the German worker, and his willingness to be exploited, made possible the rise of German industry. For deep inside, every German is and always has been convinced that guns are more important than butter; furthermore that nothing works without drill, obedience and bellowing; and finally that a few reforms are better than a big revolution. A nation of such character turns out the best soldiers and guns, and at the same time the cheapest mass production goods.

With the same sense of duty it produces the finest microscopes, cameras and chemicals. For this precision work requires the same devotion that makes a man stick to his tank under fire, and prevents him from escaping. In the one case as in the other, he thinks not of his fatherland but of his superiors and his orders. The hand that grinds the finest lenses not only turns out the best modern instruments of war but is also capable of wielding them faultlessly. Obedience, a sense of duty, a frugal way of life—these assure the Germans of top performance in industry as in war. When the craving for the Great Pyramid is heightened to the dimensions of a religion, obedience and precision are assured. When these are added to an ancient instinct for war, one has the perfect modern soldier. The Zeiss binoculars which the world prefers to other glasses spring from the same characteristic that produced the German advance in Poland.

And now for the first time this nation was united and successful.

For the first time since the Middle Ages the Germans bestrode the middle of Europe as a solid unit. Little wonder that they returned to the dreams of the Middle Ages. Unlike the United States, which they most resembled in their energy, their nature and history could hardly keep them satisfied with increasing wealth. Almost of necessity this nation was seized by the ancient vision of world dominion, at a stage which seemed to strengthen all such hopes. Had the Germans merely been out for money, fine houses, cars and gardens, they could have kept on developing peacefully along broader and broader fronts. But that would have required a sense of humour and a flair for hobbies—qualities possessed neither by the new captains of industry nor the old generals and Junkers. They all were motivated far more by ambition and thirst for power than by a craving for money. Even to-day it is not the desire for more property and greater enjoyment of life that spurs them on. A warlike people does not seek enjoyment in holidays and week-ends—it seeks to deprive others of enjoyment. Things that are freely offered to the Germans at once lose their value. They wish to take them by conquest.

In the twenty-five years before the World War, that passion sought expression in the form of an increased Army and the creation of a strong Fleet ; for the whole plan aimed at an attack upon neighbours, at conquest. To create the proper mood among the people the legend of German encirclement was invented, and like all legends it was believed when it had been repeated every day for a decade. It was this third great movement that determined the future of Germany. The obvious fact that this was not a question of a "people without space," seeking expansion without which it must stifle, is seen first from a comparison with Belgium, with a population density almost twice as great as Germany's. Yet Belgium had sent only a few thousand men out to its colonies, and even before the acquisition of the Congo it had been a rich country. It is seen next from the deficit shown by almost all the old German colonies, which in sum total cost more than they brought in. Britain, with more colonies than any other country and a long tradition of sending its children overseas, nevertheless has constantly increased its population density in the home country ; yet it has grown richer than Germany, not poorer.

The Germans are better conquerors than colonizers. They needed a theory for their dreams, and thus the teachers of the German people were not satisfied merely to rattle their sabres, as the Romans had been once upon a time. They screened their guns with a luxuriant cloak of camouflage through which the muzzles barely showed. This camouflage was called "Race" and "*Kultur*."

Hasse, a Reichstag Deputy and President of the Pan-German League, in 1895 published a book entitled *Greater Germany and Central Europe in the Year 1950*. In it he agitated for a Russo-German war, with a German victory and the annexation of the Baltic countries. All Jews and Slavs were to be shipped from Germany to Poland and Ruthenia. Greater Germany was to include the Netherlands, Belgium, the German part of Switzerland, Austria-Hungary. Also to be included were Poland, Ruthenia, Rumania and an "enlarged Serbia." There were to be eighty-six million inhabitants and one hundred and thirty-one millions economically dependent upon this Greater Germany. All this forty years before Hitler.

Two non-Germans had established the theory that the Germans or Teutons were the best race in the world: the important Frenchman Gobineau and the trivial Englishman Houston Stewart Chamberlain, both of them ailing men who built up their ideal of the radiantly fair master race from the qualities they themselves lacked. Gobineau declared that unfortunately he was unable to bear the cold climate of Sweden though he worshipped the Swedes. Chamberlain's doctrine, entirely based upon race and Wagner worship, gained considerable influence about the year 1900. Two readers who thanked the author in passionate letters at different dates were William II and Hitler. As an old man, Chamberlain actually acknowledged Hitler as his disciple. There is no need for us to enter into any controversy on the question of race superiority—the world is in agreement. And as for Nietzsche, who is so wantonly quoted on questions of race and breeding, we have outlined in pages 291-93 just what he thought about the Germans.

The second factor offered the Germans as a metaphysical sedative was *Kultur*. On one occasion even a Prussian War Minister in the Reichstag invoked it. That was General Falkenhayn before the World War, expressing himself in words that have again become timely: "If cultural advances reach the point where we can no longer enter upon a war with full confidence in our army, then let the devil take all your *Kultur*!" For the rest, however, *Kultur* was built up as a show-piece very much in the foreground, specifically for the German listener. It was in the name of *Kultur* that the official programme of the League for a Greater Germany, founded as early as 1900 and a precursor of the Nazis, demanded "inclusion of the Netherlands and Belgium as well as the German portions of Switzerland and Austria into the German Reich."

By the side of the two eugenic theorizers there appeared a historian and a general. Half a century earlier, Heinrich von Trietschke had already preached war as a philosophy, and now he continued to exert

his influence through his disciples. "Ideas of peace," he wrote, "can assert themselves only in times grown tired and soft." Karl von Bernhardt, a cavalry general and by that very reason accustomed to a faster gallop, used sharper language. From the year 1910 onward his books gained profound influence with educated Germans, and even the world listened when a Prussian general preached war in theory and practice. On account of his rank, he could be regarded as speaking officially; at the same time his publisher, who had once been the publisher of Goethe, endowed him with a literary aura. Except for the style, which retains a certain fluidity, Bernhardt's book, *Germany's Future*, published in 1912, resembles for whole pages at a time the book Hitler wrote later. The only difference is that at that time no one as yet dared openly to deride justice and culture. On the contrary, these concepts were grotesquely reinterpreted and used as a screen.

In the United States [the cavalry general wrote], President Taft has actually proposed arbitration treaties between the Powers. Such efforts must be discouraged and discredited. War must be given back its moral justification, even in public opinion. The great significance of war as the most powerful promoter of culture must become generally acknowledged, in accordance with its value. In short, a war for ideals or for the self-preservation of a noble nation must be characterized not as barbarism but as the highest expression of culture. War at once brings into play the loftiest activities of human nature. Individual crudities and frailties disappear before the idealism of the whole. A war chivalrously conducted with honest arms is more highly moral as a form of combat than the kind of war which, under cover of outward peace, seeks to lay low the enemy by the power of gold or the vicious power of intrigue. Only where the possibility of war remains will the energies of a nation continue to be preserved.

General treaties of arbitration are bound to be particularly pernicious for a rising nation which, like the Germans, has not yet attained its political and national apex and is thus dependent upon the expansion of its power in order to do justice to its cultural tasks—a power that will justify itself by mankind's most treasured possessions.

After others had invoked the shades of Kant and Goethe on behalf of the preordained hegemony of the Germans, the cavalry general from his high horse expressed the practical reasons that entitled the Germans to world dominion. Since they increased each year by one million while the French did not increase at all, they had a right to bring about a "final reckoning with France." With forty-five million British ruling over but fifteen million alien whites, there were fewer British in the world than Germans, yet the British by their cruelty had conquered one-fifth

of the world. Russians and Poles owed their culture solely to the Germans and thus belonged under German rule. In Poland racial intermixture was to be feared, and for that reason Germans must be settled there. Belgium, which had a purely formal legal claim to the Congo, performed no cultural services there, "and thus can be considered long to have relinquished its moral right to this possession. Indeed, the question arises whether from the viewpoint of higher human law this possession can be left to Belgium much longer." By virtue of its excess of population, Germany had a moral right to countries still exploited by other nations.

These were but a few of the ideal purposes of a chivalrous nation. Even the impertinent tone is apparent in the cavalry general: Germany should willingly enter into an alliance with Britain on condition "that Britain approve in advance every expansion of German power on the continent and at the same time leave the Entente." As for the question of breach of treaties—the chief tenet of the present-day German religion—the hard-riding general sought to leap over this obstacle thirty years ago, with his customary elegance:

No State can be expected to place its own existence at the mercy of formal obligations, if that existence can be better and more certainly preserved by other means.

So much for the mounted political philosopher.

The infantry generals proceeded apace with their *Kultur*-plans. The famous Schlieffen, who was regarded as a first-rate strategist, implored his General Staff to attack in any event, following in the footsteps of the seven generals who did so in the eighty-three greatest campaigns of history. His plan was regarded as so authoritative that it was not changed for twenty years.

It provided for an invasion by way of Belgium or the Netherlands, thus necessarily provoking British intervention. Though Ludendorff, in a confidential memorandum written in 1912, expressly placed this stricture on German victory and mentioned British as well as Belgian troops as possible enemies, the crucial question of the war, how to hold out against Britain, was not discussed in a single document. This can be proved to-day from the documents published by the Republic, as though the event lay centuries in the past. The Prussian War Academy clung to the axiom: "Politics must never be conceded the slightest influence on the conduct of war."

Thus the predominance of the military in Germany, arising from Prussian history, gave rise to a unique state of affairs under which

Emperor, Chancellor and General Staff never even discussed a question so vital to the German people. Even Prince Bülow assured the present author that he had been presented with three possible plans of attack, including one by way of Belgium, though the choice had not been left to him. The basic war plan itself was regarded as "unalterable." Thus the Army did not march in accordance with the political situation, but politics had to orient themselves according to the plan of attack.

Such a school as that founded by Schlieffen and Moltke necessarily resulted in the complete dependence of government leaders on generals in war-time. To the usually so ironic Berliners, as well as to the rest of the Germans, the General Staff Building was a kind of Delphic sanctuary; and the men with broad red stripes down the sides of their trousers who went in and out of there with their brief-cases had an aura of priesthood about them. These sentiments penetrated deeply among the people and only served to heighten military contempt of civilians. Every lieutenant felt himself to be choir-boy to the red-striped priests and thus entitled to ignore civilians. The red building on the Königsplatz lay opposite the German Reichstag, but contempt emanated only from the former toward the latter, never in the reverse direction.

Among all nations there is rivalry between generals and statesmen in war-time—memoirs are full of it—but only in Germany did the general regard the politician with the same feeling of superiority with which the composer does the writer of his librettos, the man permitted to write a provisional text for him, subject to change. To this day German generals share these sentiments, because they feel themselves borne up by the religious faith of their nation.

Thus when in August 1914 the Germans invaded Belgium, the General Staff was assured of the applause of the entire nation. No one rose in opposition; the best thinkers at once silenced their reason and concluded that if the General Staff gave such orders it was evidently necessary for victory. Such reactions inevitably led to the elimination of political leadership in war-time, and to the dictatorship of the two generals, Hindenburg and Ludendorff.

### 3

THE YOUTH of William II, as in the case of Luther and Bismarck, was overshadowed by hostility to his own mother. Here too the guilt was



the mother's. This daughter of the good Queen Victoria always felt a little out of her class among the Prussians, whom she regarded as barbarians. Her craving for power, moreover, was thwarted because her father-in-law, whose heritage she had hoped soon to assume, lingered on into the legendary tenth decade of life. At the same time she realized that she was blessed with greater intellectual powers than her husband.

And now, added to these unforeseen developments, there came a first-born son who was marked by a physical defect and failed to fulfil Victoria's British ideal of sound bodily health. The mother's vanity coincided with Prussian prejudices, according to which a future king must above all be a soldier; and thus the Prince was cruelly trained, despite a left arm that was too short and utterly useless, to ride and to swim, to fence and to shoot like all the other officers, only better.

Such a childhood was bound to have a fateful influence upon his character in two respects. Hatred of a mother who let him feel his weakness placed him, like Bismarck, in opposition to her convictions; and since she was an English liberal, he became a Prussian reactionary. Of greater significance was the fact that his handicap forced him to appear to be something he could not be. He grew into an actor who constantly played the strong, nimble soldier. When he laid a corner-stone, he exhibited the strength of his right arm by hammering as hard as possible, in order to hide the weakness of his left. Had he been educated, with due regard to his handicap and at the same time to his remarkable intelligence, along intellectual rather than military lines, Germany would still have received a vague romanticist as a ruler, but not one who was a blustering warmonger. For the fear of being regarded as a weakling drove him to continual swaggering. The constant uproar and all the sabre-rattling speeches with which he bombarded the world for a quarter-century were only outward show. By nature William was timid, as his closest friends have confirmed.

The tragedy of this withered left arm, while not actually turning the course of world history, contributed toward transforming this ruler into a neurasthenic upon whose reactions and emotions much depended in the world. This is best understood when William is compared with President Roosevelt, who turned another handicap into the precise opposite, a strong character which he did not possess before paralysis afflicted him in his fortieth year. True, Roosevelt was free to educate himself; William was not and may for this reason be excused. His parents should have enlightened him that it was no disgrace, indeed,

that it was of no importance whatever for a man in sound body and mind to be handicapped in one particular.

This sense of inferiority, which in William had a physical basis, is repeated before our eyes a second time in his successor. There is profound meaning in the fact that the Germans twice in succession have had neurasthenics as their leaders and that they have succumbed to the fascination of both.

True, William covered up his handicap all his life. In countless photographs, at thousands of the receptions of which the much-travelled Kaiser could never get enough, his pose was apparent. No German clergyman, courtier or schoolteacher was permitted to speak of the matter, in marked contrast to the American nation which has been taught to admire a man who governs despite his natural handicap. Not until the portrait offered in the present author's biography had exonerated the Kaiser before the world did he himself in his memoirs soon afterwards relate for the first time how terrible his youth had been. All this would be of slight significance but for the fact that it coincides with an unbalanced national character. The coarse, loud, bumptious manner exhibited by the Germans to the world was now symbolized actually by the first citizen of their nation.

When William at the age of 28, by virtue of his father's sudden death, inherited the great power Bismarck had created, he faced his task with immaturity, in every sense of the word. "In view of my son's inadequate maturity," his father had written only two years before, "coupled with his tendency toward arrogance and overestimation, I am compelled to regard it as dangerous indeed to bring him in touch with questions of foreign policy at this stage."

The exercise of power drove the nervous character of the young ruler to the very limits of sanity, and his closest advisers repeatedly suggested that he might have lost his mind like his great-uncle, and might have to be declared incompetent. When William was thirty-two, thirty-seven and forty-four, such a step was actually considered by his ministers and courtiers, who later published their letters. Yet William was decidedly talented—he had sudden inspirations, was able to charm by his graciousness, and in good moments and even over periods combined the intelligence of his English mother with the bearing of his father in a manner that attracted many people.

His character exhibits marked similarity to that of Hitler—both of them remarkable for an inertia that was the despair of their associates, both rousing themselves for only brief spells of feverish work. Both

of them were brilliant orators and actors, fond of outward show while personally of frugal habits—because they lacked culture. Both of them dispensed the same nonsense on the subject of art in their public speeches and both of them felt themselves to be misunderstood artists. Both of them were filled with mystical feelings and were fond of invoking the Deity. Both of them felt themselves to be chosen, boasted of their knowledge of men, and promised glorious times to their people. Both of them were at once mediocrities and actors. Both of them were at once gullible and ballyhoo experts. Both of them were *Pied Pipers par excellence*.

The chief difference between them lies in the fact that William was a flickering straw fire, while Hitler resembles a searing flame. William was spoiled by his heritage, Hitler is embittered by struggle. Thus William was susceptible to friendly feelings, while Hitler is the embodiment of hatred. William had grown up amid power and wealth, without the slightest worry over ever forfeiting either; Hitler grew up in misery and for this reason is perpetually worried about losing his immense gains. As early as 1890 one of his intimates wrote of the thirty-year-old William words that could be readily applied to Hitler:

One thought dominates all his actions—concern for his personal position, a desire to be popular. To this is added worry about his personal safety and a rapidly increasing vanity. He virtually revels in ovations and likes nothing better than the hurrahs of shouting crowds. Since he is much taken with his own abilities, unfortunately illusory, he reacts very favourably to flattery. Wherever he goes, he wins hearts—unless he stays too long.

Hitler, though lacking even a drop of English blood, has, so to speak, inherited William's great hate-love of England—an emotion that dominated William's entire policy and became a reason for the World War.

William, nevertheless, could have developed to a much higher level, had his mind not been constantly befogged by the flattery of the Germans. The trail of sycophants accompanied his path for twenty-five years and did not end until his flight. It embraced all walks of life and showed anew the lack of self-confidence in the German character—a lack which has spoiled German rulers for centuries.

It began at the top with the Junkers and Counts who surrounded him and it ended down below with the lackey, who in this matter was distinguished from the highest dignitaries only by his uniform. Other kings have been surrounded by flatterers, though history always records

a few men like Jacoby who, as has been cited before, told his King the truth in 1848. Even in Germany there were one or two every century, from Luther onward. But the new Germans, who had been dazzled by the Empire, spoiled by money, and confused by their new rôle of world importance, nursed their enthusiasm for William II for twenty-five years, and, if they had had the opportunity to re-elect him as President, they would have given him their vote with the same spirit with which thirty years later they elected Adolf Hitler to power.

There was one Count, for example, who humbly asked the Kaiser's permission to have his, the Count's, cows wear the same cowbells as the Imperial herds. There was a Junker who, after a hunt, had the following inscription set in gold letters into a block of granite: AT THIS POINT HIS MAJESTY BAGGED A WHITE COCK PHEASANT, THE FIFTY-THOUSANDTH CREATURE TO FALL BEFORE THE ALL-HIGHEST. There were preachers who in the Kaiser's own presence made the churches ring with praise of his virtues. There were ambassadors who put the most incredible compliments about the Kaiser into the mouths of the Kings to whom they were accredited. There were generals who, on the occasion of the Imperial manoeuvres, secreted hundreds of riflemen in order to throw victory at the decisive moment to the army led by the Kaiser. There was General von Mackensen, who kissed the Kaiser's gloved hand, introducing this custom in the army.

For decades the newspaper clippings were pasted up in such a way that the Kaiser learned only agreeable things about his country. His marginal notes to their reports were cabled back to the ambassadors so that they might conform more to his taste the next time. In Washington, Ambassador Speck von Sternburg, in a public speech, described the Kaiser as "the greatest universal intellect in the world, a man who equally masters industry and science, the fine arts and music." At the gates of the cities and town halls the mayors shivered without their coats, in full dress and gold chains, greeting their fur-muffled overlord and dislocating their necks, for the Kaiser generally listened to them astride his horse. The managers of his estates reported to the Kaiser that his cows gave forty quarts of milk a day and he never learned how much they were given to drink. The depths of inanity were attained by the German professors, men like Slaby, Harnack, Dörpfeld, Bode, who listened in silent awe as the Kaiser pronounced the silliest judgments in their own expert fields. Professor Deussen, a leading figure of the time, wrote that "the Kaiser will lead us from Goethe to Homer and Sophocles, from Kant to Pluto"; and Lamprecht, Germany's cele-

brated historian, as late as 1912, in a special essay, called the Emperor "A personality of primeval stature and mighty will-power, to whom all the regions of the creative artist's destiny stand for ever open."

A memorable exception among the professors, Mommsen, on one occasion contradicted the Kaiser before witnesses. The Kaiser was restoring an ancient Roman castle and had to listen as the expert on Roman history told him of the insignificance of his discovery. Similarly, a certain Baron von Levetzow at a public dinner rejected the Kaiser's insults to his class. But the worshipful chorus was rarely disturbed by the intellect. Quidde wrote a historical, Fulda a dramatic, parody on William, and the sculptor Gaul refused to place a flying eagle on a monument to the Kaiser. A few Socialist editors occasionally got themselves locked up for telling the truth. Of intellectual fighters against the Byzantines there were but two—the *Simplicissimus* magazine, whose poets and artists ridiculed the régime, and Maximilian Harden, who criticized it brilliantly and in the grand style for twenty years. His work, comparable to that of Karl Kraus in Vienna, represented the only education that intellectually prepared the German bourgeoisie for the Revolution.

Only once did the German people show signs of rising against their Kaiser. That was in November 1908, just ten years before he deserted them. During manœuvres William, mounted on his horse, had made revelations to an English colonel on the subject of advice he had given his English grandmother, Queen Victoria, during the Boer War—according to the Kaiser it was a battle plan with which Lord Roberts later was supposed to have won the war. The interview was authorized by the Kaiser, and somehow the Chancellor failed to censor it. The English were chided in it in the most outrageous terms, and its appearance in London filled them with silent fury at this insult. As for the Germans, they rose audibly. In the press and at meetings, in every conversation and every walk of life, there was indignation about the Kaiser's tactless talk. Even without war or defeat, without emergency legislation or police measures, the German people felt that their Kaiser with his perpetual frivolity had deceived them.

In this crisis William could have been compelled to abdicate; he himself actually thought of such a possibility and failed to do so only because of the refusal of his son. But it was only his Junkers who took the idea seriously. In the Reichstag, where the Chancellor with half-hearted words defended rather than accused his master, there were only

a few speeches and no resolutions at all. On this occasion too, the Germans clung to order and authority. Within two weeks all was forgotten. As for the Kaiser, he showed his contempt by celebrating uproarious festivals with a princely friend of his during those very days, and by having the reports printed daily. The Germans were as startled at their own audacity as they had been in the year 1848. They retired and allowed the same man, with the same régime, for the present even with the same Chancellor, to continue governing until war became inevitable.

## 4

WHILE German science and engineering under William produced men of true greatness—Röntgen, Ehrlich, Einstein, Planck, Diesel, Zeppelin—German literature and art lagged behind. None of the thinkers, the creators in the fine arts or literature, who flourished under William survived his era. None became Germany's intellectual leader. Sunk in oblivion to-day are even the names of those whose plays attained record performances, whose books reached the highest sales—the representatives of the Left and of modern art no less than those of the academic school. Hauptmann and Wildenbruch have been forgotten likewise.

Up to the World War thoughtful Germans accepted leadership from abroad—from Tolstoy, Zola, Ibsen, Björnson, Shaw. At home even valiant and brilliant professors like Max Weber and a few publicists remained without influence. The German Revolution would have come and gone, independent of a single German book being published during that period. Even beyond the borders of Germany no German book attained any appreciable influence on the world's thought, though in the last twenty years more German books have been translated into the main languages of the world than ever before. Spengler's *Decline of the West* is an exception, but its influence was necessarily negative.

After 1900 there were true poets too, above all, Dehmel, Rilke and Hofmannsthal. Yet after Nietzsche only one of them exerted a formative effect upon German minds—that was Stefan George. Though little read, he built himself a small community, purely aesthetic in the beginning, but gradually sending its missionaries into the universities and even the ministries. George was as devoted to the invisible Germany as once

upon a time Klopstock and Hölderlin had been, and as sceptical of the Germans as they. His is a solitary place in recent German history and his career came to a tragic climax by reason of an unexampled affront. The Nazis, having lost Nietzsche thirty years earlier, turned to the "Master Man" whose praises George sang; indeed, they offered George himself the office of high priest in the new State. The poet had but to take one look at the picture of their Führer to turn away in horror. When they continued their importunities, the aged and ailing poet, who never travelled, left Germany overnight, only to die in exile almost immediately, like Euripides. The twelve granite slabs of his grave in Muralto, in the southernmost corner of Switzerland, are lined with laurel and recall the graves of those other prophets and poets who had to flee the reach of the German State for the sake of their intellectual integrity. But Stefan George was the first to flee the barbarians lest he be crowned by them.

In but one branch of the arts did the Germany of William come to the fore of culture. Under the actor-emperor, the German theatre attained the position formerly occupied by the French. As far as opera is concerned, Vienna continued to be the most musical city in the world; but in Berlin two men above all others created a new art of stage presentation far transcending anything they were able to offer by way of modern German drama. Brahms was the realist. As for Max Reinhardt, he offered the Germans, among many other masterpieces, a new Shakespeare who was as significant on the stage as had been the printed works in the translation by Schlegel a hundred years before. With the exception of Freud and Strauss, Reinhardt's was the only world conquest attained by the Germans during the past half-century, as a purely national achievement. Zeppelin, whose world success might be regarded as comparable, finally went up in air and fire, like other German dreams.

Not only in Germany but everywhere, creative art was waning and giving way to virtuosity. Yet even with this change the Germans, true to their ancient mission, maintained first place in the field of music. Conductors, singers and soloists carried the German name out into the world. The man who reached farthest was Richard Strauss, the greatest virtuoso of his time, who with his magic skill drove the Wagnerian style to extremes, finally weaning musical youth away from it. The newer German composers all turned away from Wagner, especially Mahler and Reger.

## 5

SINCE the so-called "Settlement of 1867," the seven racial stocks that lived under the Hapsburgs in Austria-Hungary had been ruled by two "races," the Germans and the Magyars. The Czechs, Ruthenians, Slovaks, Poles, Serbs and Croats were represented in the Austrian Reichstag but only rarely in the Government itself. And since the German and Hungarian members of the Government were almost invariably of the nobility, the Danubian countries with their fifty million inhabitants were, until the World War, actually governed by two dozen Junker families. New settlements of the language problem were constantly attempted by the Government and the Army; but in the end it was this problem that was the monarchy's undoing. What had been possible in Switzerland, a much smaller country—mutual respect for three languages—was impossible in Vienna for the sole reason that Francis Joseph expressly styled himself a German prince.

The aged Emperor, obstinate, overbearing and narrow-minded, refused to pursue either of the two courses that alone could have saved the monarchy. He could have returned to absolute government in the manner of Metternich, which would have run counter to the spirit of the time, but would have been logical and, for a while, as feasible as it was in Russia. Or he could have transformed his Empire into a federation of independent States, with one monarch at the head—in the manner of the British Empire before the war. This is supposed to have been the solution envisioned by his heir-apparent, Francis Ferdinand.

All the world had long foreseen the end of this rotten structure, but Germany was allied with it—allied in the fashion of William II, by means of true sentiment. To use the term then current, the two Emperors had pledged each other the so-called Nibelungen faith, which even the Nibelungs had broken. In the modern parallel, by the way, that faith was broken not by the Germans but by the Austrians, who in 1908 suddenly confronted their allies with the annexation of Bosnia.

It was for this reason, among others, that William, who sincerely believed in the divine right of Kings, kept on good terms with the Czar, especially after the old Czar died, and was succeeded by his neurasthenic son Nicholas. In a somewhat ridiculous exchange of correspondence, later made public by the Bolsheviks, the two Emperors addressed each



other by the nicknames of "Willy" and "Nicky," the weakling German seeking to hoodwink the still weaker Russian. When the Czar had been completely intimidated by his defeat at the hands of Japan, Willy, in the summer of 1905, swept him off his feet with an alliance—secretly concluded in the northern gulf of Björkö, and shortly afterwards denounced by the Czar's ministers.

After the fateful rupture of the treaty between Germany and Russia which we related toward the end of Book IV—on the occasion of Bismarck's dismissal—Russia had gone over to France and stayed with France; it actually entered the World War against Germany on the side of France. This "encirclement," therefore, was the Kaiser's own fault. In his attempts to seek support from Italy in return, he was aware, or at least others were, that Italy's ancient enmity against Austria continued and that the Triple Alliance could have remained a practical reality only by virtue of great sacrifices on the part of Austria.

When, in this schism of Europe, friends of the Czar brought forward the idea of an international court of arbitration, the Germans reacted exactly as did their General von Bernhardi. They laughed; and only a handful of men without influence dared hope, in the year 1898, that a new chapter of history might be written at The Hague. To lay down arms, to accept a court in place of our good sword? Derisive doggerel and mocking speeches made sport of the ideas of the high-minded Baroness von Suttner, who for many years, in Germany itself, had sought to fight for world peace. When the Kaiser wrote the word "Nonsense" in the margin of the proposed plan, the Chancellor declared: "The matter is thereby decided in the negative." In London too the Prime Minister had to meet the opposition of a military group. Everywhere the plan met with derisive opposition, but in Berlin scorn was unrelieved.

At the first Hague Peace Conference, Germany was almost alone in rejecting the international court of arbitration. Even then, the morality of the German State was frozen in the mould in which it appeared in the first and second World Wars. Bülow's reports of the Conference to the Kaiser read like the reports of a Governor of Judea to the Roman Emperor on the subject of repressing the newly risen Galilean teachings. As for William himself, he concluded the episode with these unvarnished soldier's words, written in the margin, as was his wont: "I shall appeal to God alone and depend upon my keen sword! *Und scheisse auf die ganzen Beschlüsse!*"

A year before, the Kaiser had received a final warning. Almost against his own will, Bismarck had become a popular favourite; and at the

age of eighty, in the market-place at Jena, he delivered his first speech to the people. In the little Thuringian town, made famous by Luther, and later by Goethe and Schiller, and where in 1817 those few pugnacious students had rioted, the dismissed Chancellor was acclaimed by the German people with whom he had so long been unpopular.

The Kaiser did not yield. His bad conscience, the unsteadiness of his character, his resentment that anyone in the land dared be more popular than he—all these drove him to stage a theatrical mock reconciliation; but the old man continued his attacks against the régime without interference. Bismarck trembled for the fate of the Empire he had created with his own hand, lest it suffer at those of his careless successors—as the retired founder of a trust trembles when he reads in the newspapers how the present managers speculate with the once gilt-edged investments. When at last the Kaiser was certain that the evil old man must soon die, he visited Bismarck once more in 1897. At the table Bismarck for the last time raised his voice and, in conversation, almost without any preliminaries, told the Kaiser before the assembled courtiers:

“As long as you have this corps of officers, Your Majesty, it is true that you can permit yourself anything. Should that no longer be the case, it will be quite a different matter.”

It was a dreadful warning, uttered twenty years before this corps of officers did fail. But the Kaiser passed over the words. He did not closet himself with the old man—in all the eight years he never once sought Bismarck’s counsel; he felt he knew better about everything. And what actually was his reply? He retorted with a banal joke: “Do you know the difference between a cigar and a mother-in-law?”

As in a vision, Bismarck now gave up his Empire as lost and, in his final conversations, which have been recorded like the one just cited, he foretold the Republic, as had the Kaiser’s own mother.

After the Hague interlude (1899), which William called the “silly prank of a boy dreamer”—he meant the Czar, of course—the armaments race began. Half of Europe sought to keep pace with Germany’s armaments on land and Britain’s at sea.

At that time the war was still avoidable. With some show of reason the major powers could have come to some agreement in the Balkans. In France, the war party was small and the desire for peace infinite. The two crumbling Eastern empires trembled at the thought of war. And as for England—it could not have shown a single war aim. Except for

Germany, no one sought expansion and world markets—in the sense of von Bernhardt's and William's war speeches ; and yet the Germans were taught, and the world was told, that it was Britain which sought to lay its German rival low by means of a war. The Kaiser himself stood behind this slander.

This love-hatred of William II was the deepest and most abiding passion of his life. It sprang from resentment of his half-British descent, from his hatred of his mother. For this reason alone he distrusted her brother, King Edward, whom he soon learned to hate in the aspect of the older, calmer uncle. William's feelings were deeply wounded by the fact that this British gentleman and business man failed to take seriously his noisy relative who was for ever strutting and talking. This personal enmity poisoned the whole naval question which in turn determined British policy.

Three times before, about 1900, the British had attempted to reach an alliance with Germany. Joseph Chamberlain, the greater father of the two well-known sons, had sought to realize Bismarck's last plans by creating this natural bond. When Chamberlain's willingness was recognized in Berlin, the reaction was typically German : " Give them two rebuffs ! " A single privy councillor of great influence, a certain Holstein, a lone intriguer and stock speculator, held the threads in his hand ; yet even now he was merely a symbol of the German character. When negotiations were already fully under way, with both nations applauding the alliance—industry and business almost in agreement, the workers entirely without reservations—Kaiser and Chancellor tricked their new partner. The arbitrary government of the Kaiser, who could conclude alliances without asking anyone's permission, led to grotesque scenes that belong to the period of the Rococo rather than to our own century. A telegram sent by the Kaiser on the occasion of a regatta in Cowes was so tactless that all negotiations were nullified. Thus, after four years of negotiations, the plan of an Anglo-German alliance failed, in considerable part, at least, because of the whims of a single, abnormal man.

The same deception underlay the building of the German Navy. As an island empire, Britain could not very well relinquish a certain naval superiority, and it sought to reach agreement with Germany over keeping construction programmes within reason. But the man who, since 1897, as Secretary of the Navy, had inspired all this naval expansion, Admiral von Tirpitz, an eminent expert and a man of great qualities, represented a special variant of the German character—to put it bluntly,

he was a liar. Tirpitz was the first high German officer to practise trickery and spite in the grand manner, vices that have since been elevated to the status of official soldierly virtues by Göring. With Tirpitz the pictures of the "Old Salt"—the "Marshal Forward" as exemplified by Blücher—and the simple German officer—the German *Michel* in patchwork coat—faded; for Tirpitz in turn deceived the British and the Kaiser, and at times even Prince von Bülow. He presented plans that concealed his true purpose, his one aim being to steer smoothly through what he considered a danger zone, during which he sought to build so many ships that the British threat would be eliminated.

"After 1920," the Kaiser wrote in 1908, "we shall be able to reach agreements with the British on the subject of naval construction without binding ourselves." The German ambassador, Count Wolff-Metternich, one of the shrewdest statesmen in the new Germany, fought Tirpitz for nine years from the vantage-point of London, only to succumb in the end. Much later, in retirement, he witnessed William's collapse, yet he avoided speaking ill of the Kaiser to his friends, though the Kaiser, in the end, had treated him badly. There were such honourable exceptions even among the German nobility.

The desire for colonies, which was to justify the building of a navy, has never been popular among the German people. The Germans always think along military lines, and thus in Africa too, with one exception, the officer always ranked before the business man—as in German deals with Britain. As a consequence, the German colonies, during the thirty years of their existence, with a single exception, cost money instead of bringing in profit. Nowhere in Africa has the present author been able to authenticate later assertions that the Germans were particularly cruel toward the natives. The Germans were unpopular merely because they treated the coloured peoples like their own white inferiors, brusquely and coldly. The Prussian was never born to be a colonizer; a few adaptable Austrians did much better.

The great steamship lines and the great migrations of Germans led to foreign lands, not to the German colonies. The Germany of William II grew rich not because of its colonies but despite them. The dogma that nations cannot live without raw materials is refuted by the relative prosperity of the Scandinavian countries and by a comparison of Switzerland and Belgium, the latter, with its huge colonial possessions, no richer nor happier than the former, which lacked colonies, raw materials and ships. Rapid communication between continents, modern world commerce, the discoveries of the chemists—these have rendered

all countries independent of colonial possessions. Is there better proof than present-day Germany? In order to take the field in a war which allegedly is to supply Germany with its share of the world's treasures, it was able to arm without that share so well that within a few months it conquered half of Europe. This fact alone shows that the need for direct colonies no longer exists, for, indeed, the entire colonial age is passing.

During the exciting negotiations on questions of naval competition, with documents of state beginning with "Grandma" and "Dear William," the Kaiser felt frustrated in his innermost heart, for he refused to admit to himself that he was emotionally involved. He resembled a man who has brought his wife to the brink of despair by years of nagging and hypersensitivity, only to be surprised, and to feel himself the innocent party, when she suddenly seeks a divorce. His mood becomes plain from the following expletives, taken from his marginal notes: "A lie!" . . . "The dog lies!" "England!" "Uncle!" "A charming gentleman!" "Unbelievable effrontery!" "Hypocrite!" "Rubbish!" "Tripe!" "Hurrah, there we have those scoundrels of Britons!"

The result was the Entente. Edward no more cared to stand alone in the world than did Chamberlain before him. He spent much time in Paris in attempts to win favour for Britain, then highly unpopular in France, as well as for his own person, which had almost become a laughing-stock. He succeeded, though a few years before France had felt itself cheated by Britain of a colonial conquest along the Nile. France, humiliated at Tangiers in 1905 by one of the Kaiser's impulsive gestures, took the hint dropped by fate and seized the outstretched British hand. Germany was not encircled—it put itself beyond the pale. Two great systems of alliances now confronted each other in Europe. The conflict between them was bound to lead to war.

That there was a world war in the offing was known to but a few in the final years. One man alone thirty years before foresaw the future with magnificent vision. In 1888 Friedrich Engels had these sentences printed: "For Germany no war is possible any longer other than a world war of undreamed-of expansion and vehemence. Eight to ten million soldiers will annihilate each other. [It turned out to be nine million dead.] The devastation of the Thirty Years' War will be crowded into three or four years and spread over the entire continent. There will be famine and pestilence, chaos in commerce, industry and credit, and in the end a general bankruptcy. The old States will collapse and with them

their traditions of statecraft ; crowns will roll in the streets by the dozen and there will be none to pick them up."

## 6

NEVERTHELESS, when the war broke out in the summer of 1914, the German people were taken by surprise as were all the other nations. As a nation the German people had neither expected nor prepared for the war as they did twenty-five years later, but unlike all the other peoples they exhibited joyous enthusiasm instead of alarm. The great training-school that had lasted, first for three hundred, and then again for forty years, had held this nation in armed expectancy. The Germans—all the many millions of them—resembled a professional fire-fighting force in which every man leaps out of bed at night at the first warning bell to hasten to his long-prepared place known to him from a hundred practice-tests. All the other nations ran to their places like members of a volunteer fire brigade, with signs of confusion and terror.

We have discussed in another place the component elements of war-guilt—how four, or actually five, Governments, partly from self-interest, partly through error, had their share in it. That the greatest share of the guilt lies distributed between Berlin and Vienna would follow from the whole background and from the declarations of war, if it did not already follow from the psychology, the teachings and the methods of the Prussians. These indications, however, do not yet tell anything of the guilt of the German people. That guilt does not spring from the frivolous arrogance of their Government ; the people were not consulted in its decisions, not even the German Reichstag. When at the end of the War the German Government was found guilty at Versailles, it was on the basis of conclusive evidence.

But the deeper guilt for the World War strikes home directly to the German people. It is vain to represent an idle onlooker as innocent of a crime to which he has acquiesced for years. A husband whose life has been ruined by his own wife must perforce beat his own breast and ask himself : "Why did I take her—why keep her ?" The history of the last hundred years pronounces the German people as guilty as does the history of the last ten years to-day. In the last century all around Germany half a dozen nations had risen against their governments,

overthrowing kings, erecting barricades, constitutions and parliaments. They had fought for their liberties with their lives and bodies. Only the Germans had not lifted a finger, satisfied to be regarded as incapable of managing their own affairs. They had accepted the slave status forced upon them by incompetent princes, arrogant Junkers and decadent courts; and on the one occasion when they did dare rise, they quickly permitted themselves to be chased back into their mouseholes. Why? That it was not cowardice has been proved in all of their wars. Why, then?

It was the habit of obedience that kept them from fighting for their freedom. It was worship of their superiors, expanded to the proportions of a religion, that prevented them from shooting down their oppressors. To make a revolution, the Germans waited for orders that never came. Since they had few popular leaders and since these, when they did appear, wore no uniforms, the masses never dared advance to the fray. They fight from obedience rather than from indignation. They fight in well-organized troops—not as irregulars, to say nothing of revolutionaries. That was why they never conducted a war against Napoleon in the manner of the Spaniards.

With the full glare of the twentieth century beating down on them, the Germans still permitted themselves to be driven by their herders like a tractable flock of sheep, deprived of influence on the great issues affecting the nation. Indeed, of their own free will they had voted in the North German Reichstag (1867, confirmed in 1871) against any exercise of control by their own parliament, thus surrendering any right to decide questions of war and peace themselves. Now that their Emperor, a ninety per cent. dictator, with the power to declare war and conclude alliances, had led them into a life-and-death struggle under the worst possible circumstances—115 millions pitted against 665—these chosen representatives of the German people were bound to obey.

For decades the workers had fraternized with their brothers in other lands, had delivered speeches and passed resolutions to prevent a war. But now the moment had come to act. A general strike, such as had been authorized a few days before the outbreak of the war by the International, assembled in Brussels, would have paralyzed the war machine. Such a general strike, of course, would have had to be simultaneous on both sides—at least in Berlin and Paris. Had not the German workers been abused and incarcerated by the very same Junkers who now urged the Kaiser into war, indeed by the Kaiser himself? "They are all to have one will, and that is my will. With the subversive activities now rampant, it may happen that I order you to shoot down your own kin—

your parents and brothers—may God forbid ! But even then you must carry out my orders without grumbling !” And after the Berlin streetcar strike of 1900, the Emperor had wired the commander of the capital : “ I expect that the next time there will be a bag of at least five hundred.” Since the Kaiser regarded his subjects as game, he used a hunting term.

Nevertheless, now, when it was a matter of the Reichstag refusing to authorize the first billions, the Social Democrats unanimously approved the bill. The only one to vote in the negative, at least at the second credit, was Karl Liebknecht, son of the same Liebknecht who in July 1870 had refused to vote for similar appropriations in a similar situation involving France. Thus the houses of Hohenzollern and Liebknecht meet in German history.

The German warrior nation enthusiastically marched out into the battlefield, for it had been successfully persuaded that it was viciously attacked. It was the same nation that in its martial songs recalled the grim but oh, so familiar barracks, the same that, a few months before the war, in the exploits of a brazen lieutenant, had given the world the following striking instance of its dependence upon sabres, revolvers and uniforms.

In Zabern, a small army post in Alsace, a twenty-year-old Junker lieutenant had abused Alsatian recruits, offering a bounty for assaults on unruly Alsatians. When the facts became known, schoolboys began to waylay the lieutenant and badger him, until he ordered a guard of soldiers to escort him on his walks about town. This armed guard against schoolboys made him an object of ridicule. The colonel, another Junker, ordered fifty men with bayonets and live cartridges to form a line outside the barracks, which only served to increase a crowd of resentful townspeople. The colonel then addressed the crowd and threatened bloodshed. Two listeners who dared to laugh were arrested and locked up in the barracks' coal-cellar pending a hearing the following day—one of them was a local prosecutor. Since the boys on their nimble legs were able to get away, the colonel's armed host succeeded in making only one other capture, a lame cobbler, struck over the head by the lieutenant with a sabre until he collapsed.

When popular excitement mounted at reports of the incident, the highest military authorities intervened in order to “ teach respect to the civilian rabble and expose the undisciplined civilian Government in Alsace.” The Junker colonel was instructed to commend his lieutenant publicly, the Junker general publicly commended the colonel ; the



Junker War Minister publicly commended the general. This outraged the German Reichstag to such an extent that for the first time in German history a vote of confidence in the Chancellor and the War Minister failed to be carried, whereupon the Kaiser promptly expressed his own confidence to both officials. In the *Kreuzzeitung* the Junker chief of the Berlin police offered legal evidence that the officers had acted within their rights, and a court-martial subsequently acquitted them all. The only ones to be incarcerated were some recruits who had commented on the prize offered by their lieutenant. The governor of Alsace was dismissed from office.

Counter to stage usage, this farce was enacted before, rather than after, the main drama—the tragedy of the war. A historian could have recognized in it elements of disintegration. The case of Zabern shows the German officer's spirit to be utterly remote from the times and the people—and such a spirit could not pervade the State with impunity. How could the generals, who that same year took the field—generals harbouring such sentiments—be expected to know the man in the trenches, and how could the man in the trenches be expected to know his leaders? What if such generals now took over political control as well, if amid all the war danger an entire nation were led by men who approved the acquittal of Zabern? The uncompromising attitude of War Minister von Falkenhayn in this matter won the special favour of the Kaiser; and without Zabern, von Falkenhayn would not have become Chief of the High Command within a few months.

But the German tragedy is not exhausted by pointing out the contrast between people and leaders—it only begins there. There was a conflict that went far deeper. It too followed from German insecurity and boastfulness, as symbolized by the Kaiser.

For one month, from June 28 to July 28, 1914, William had incited his allies, his ambassadors, even his Chancellor, to war. In countless marginal notes, he had expressed his orders and at the same time his moods—in a towering rage induced by the assassination of the Austrian Archduke, whom William heartily disliked, but in whom he saw a symbol of his own divine mission. The Kaiser had expressed no emotional reaction on the occasion of the assassination of the French President Carnot, but the most violent indignation when an attempt was made upon King Umberto. Now he was deeply injured and wrote: "Now or never! We must clean up the Serbs!"

At the same time he was impelled by the desire to appear as the strong

man—the same desire that had made him hide his own physical handicap all his life. He knew that his generals regarded him as cowardly while they regarded the Crown Prince as a hero, even though the latter's victories had mostly taken place exclusively in boudoirs. Another factor was that William's character tolerated only weak and devoted ministers, such as Bethmann-Hollweg. Had affairs of state in July 1914, instead of being in the hands of the humble Bethmann-Holweg, the spiteful Isvolsky and the criminal Count Berchthold, been handled by three other men who had been in power before and who were still available—Bülow, Witte and Tisza—the World War would have been avoided, at least at that time and under those particular circumstances.

The German noblemen who first sought, then made, conducted, and finally lost the war, gave the most striking demonstration of their inherited capacity at its very outbreak. After three hundred years of monopolizing the privileges of ambassadorships and cabinet posts, they were not even capable at the decisive moment of conducting negotiations such as every experienced business man takes in his stride. Count Pourtalès, the German Ambassador in St. Petersburg, had been wired the text of a declaration of war from Berlin in two versions, for two different contingencies, but to be on the safe side he handed them both to the Russian Minister, written on the same piece of paper. At the same hour the members of the Austrian Embassy in St. Petersburg waited beside their packed trunks, expecting the arrival of their own declaration of war at any moment. A coded telegram finally came. When officials had decoded the telegram, the Ambassador tensely read to the excited listeners: "Vienna, August 1, 1914. Her Excellency, Countess Berchthold, requests that the long-ordered Russian chocolate be not forgotten." (Reported to the present author by an eye-witness.)

On that day the Kaiser had already lost the game. The further he had gone, the more his nervous character had begun to vacillate. A true actor, he had whipped himself up to battle and a hero's death, with the certainty in the back of his mind that he could be called upon to die only on the stage, not in reality. Thus when the Serbs had almost entirely accepted the Vienna ultimatum, the Kaiser was relieved and wrote: "This removes any reason for war!" It was too late. The Viennese counts had mapped out a fine campaign and would not go without it. For forty years the annual manoeuvres and test mobilizations had painted the shadows on the wall. Now the spectres came down from their walls and tottered about Europe. Even in St. Petersburg and

Paris there were war parties that had long waited for their hour. For three days William vainly fired one warning message after another at his Vienna allies and Berlin generals. The machine was stronger, and he was not strong enough to shut the door on it with a single powerful move and to pocket the key. In that event he would have had to fear dethronement by the party of the Crown Prince.

When it was all over, he attributed all the guilt to others, after the fashion of weak men, writing that "Slavic treachery, Latin arrogance, truly British perfidy" bore the guilt for the war; the real culprit was King Edward, "who even in death is stronger than I who am alive!" The Kaiser, in whom the world saw the King of the Huns, actually went into the World War a desperate man. With tragic countenance he stood on the balcony of his palace, calling out a few words to the citizens of Berlin. But the crowd down below did not sing the *Deutschland* song, nor the Imperial Anthem, nor an old army song; it struck up an ancient Lutheran hymn that would have been more suitable for the end of a war, and that began: "Let us give thanks to God, with heart and hand and voices!" Two generations before, in March 1848, the rebellious crowd before the same palace had sung: "Jesus, shepherd of my soul!"

## 7

THE COURSE of the World War will not be related here. In that war the German character emerged in its best form—brave, obedient, willing to make sacrifices. The German people suffered less destruction of homes than the French, for the enemy virtually never stood on their soil. On the other hand, they were in greater want, for they were inside a fortress, and in the second half of the war they literally starved. While death took its toll from every family of the two nations, inwardly both felt morally secure—that is to say, innocently attacked. The German middle class and working class can hardly be blamed for believing such a thing in the beginning. But even if the German people must share the guilt for the outbreak of the war, since they left their government to a small class, they are innocent of the war's protracted duration. After the destruction of the International, the workers lacked the means for forcing peace. When they attempted to do so, they were compelled to recognize that they were powerless, reduced to mere numbers.

Only the individual was able to sacrifice himself as a symbol. Karl Liebknecht did so, going to the penitentiary because two years after the outbreak of the War he distributed leaflets in Berlin stating that Germany should fight only in its own defence—the very aim the Government had proclaimed to be its own. As early as the year 1917 two hundred thousand workers went on strike in Berlin, only to be brought to their knees by means of violence and martial law. Late in 1917, when Russian voices, especially that of Trotsky, spread throughout the world from Brest-Litovsk, the Germans too were deeply affected. Early in 1918, a million and a half workers went on strike in Austria and Germany. Their only demand was that all conquest should be renounced, and on the basis of such a formula Germany could then still have obtained an honourable peace. Dreadful penalties were imposed and among them there was a new one that served more than anything else to shatter the heroic theory of the war. Those found guilty were transported from the factories to the battlefield. What heretofore had been a matter of conscience and honour now became punishment and degradation.

The Supreme War Lord was now rarely in evidence. After thundering and raging for twenty-five years, he now sat in boredom in some palace, a field-grey uniform the only evidence of his participation in the war for which he was responsible. While the world characterized him as a second Attila, he lived in pale retirement beyond the zone of danger and decision. The main concern of the hostile war lords at the time was to spare each other. It was agreed that neither was to bombard the other's Headquarters. Even the Fleet, the main cause of the war, was held in port for four years by the anxious Kaiser. All the people learned about him was that, while all the Germans had to surrender their copper heirlooms, he had a copper bathtub built into his special train; and, furthermore, that at a time when Germans got no more than two eggs a month, the Kaiser was content with a plain war-time fare of three courses each for luncheon and dinner.

The basic reason for the Kaiser's eventual surrender of power was his fear of revolts to come. In keeping with his education and outlook, he soon retired to the protection of his generals, to secure himself from his subjects.

The fact that it happened to be General von Hindenburg<sup>1</sup> who was put at the head of the Army, and thus later of the Reich, was the con-

<sup>1</sup> The author follows the analysis given in his book *Hindenburg* (Heinemann London, 1935).

sequence of a fateful accident that cost the German people two of the greatest defeats in their history. For it was Hindenburg who as a person and a dictator lost the World War, and who as a person and a president called in the Nazis.

At the beginning of the war, when Hindenburg was recalled from retirement, he was a long-superannuated general of sixty-six years of age. A Junker, and the son of East-Prussian landowners who had been officers for centuries, he was at the same time a descendant of herring fishermen and gravediggers, for one of his grandfathers had been guilty of marrying a commoner. Thus it happened that one of his great-grandfathers was a giant grenadier standing at attention at the gates of the Potsdam palace, while another great-grandfather, a Junker, descended from his carriage in front of the palace. A great-grandmother of Hindenburg—the wife of the grenadier—was a washerwoman at the court and may well have washed the clothes another great-grandmother wore to the court ball. Hindenburg's mother was passionately proud of her ancestry—in the year 1848 she hid and saved the King's flag—and she brought up the boy in an atmosphere of marked hostility to the people. But the all-important quality without which his later career cannot be understood, his height of six feet one inch, was inherited not from the Junkers, but from his grenadier ancestor.

As a lieutenant he was in Paris in 1871 and then entered Berlin by way of the Brandenburg Gate, riding in the triumphant procession behind his King. Subsequently he passed through the prescribed career of a dutiful troop leader, without ever attracting any notice. Such a man was now needed, to be placed above General Ludendorff, who was known as a strategist but regarded as too young, much as business organizations like to place an old gentleman as chairman in nominal authority over the executive head.

Though they had enjoyed a similar education, Hindenburg and Ludendorff are distinct from, and supplementary to, each other, because of their characters and the dominant impressions of their youth. All witnesses speak of Hindenburg's character and Ludendorff's spirit; none put it the other way. No one records any original idea, either professionally or personally, on the part of Hindenburg; and no one allows Ludendorff the slightest friendly trait. What Hindenburg brought into the partnership was an imperturbable disposition, and this was opposed by a wealth of ability possessed only by the other partner. Foch said of the two: "*Ludendorff, c'est un général; Hindenburg, c'est un patriote.*"

Their physical appearance carried out the contrast. Beside the rugged

Hindenburg, who seemed as though carved out of wood and who was born to inspire respect, the much smaller though by no means slender Ludendorff appeared ill-proportioned. This pair lacked the fine physical contrast offered by Sickingen and Hutten. Hindenburg, in good health until his seventieth and then again until his eighty-seventh year, slept, ate and moved all his life in a carefully tested rhythm, never broken by his work, not even during the war ; while Ludendorff, who shortly before the war had fallen ill of exhaustion, with his pale complexion and sagging cheeks showed during the war the traces of his tremendous labours, unrelieved by sport or recreation. Ludendorff was never at rest, never satisfied.

No one ever saw Hindenburg excited, or Ludendorff laughing. Whether innate scepticism had extinguished in Ludendorff every feeling except ambition, or whether his fatalism increased as he pondered more and more deeply the problem of man, it is certain that Ludendorff believed in nothing, and, therefore, that he relied on luck.

Hindenburg, on the other hand, built his life upon faith in God and the King who had been instituted by God. He began or concluded every army order by invoking God ; and after every important decision he added : " May God be with us ! "

Both men, in different ways, brought with them from the cadet corps traits that made them eminent second-raters—the one character, the other ability, the one steadfastness, the other knowledge ; both of them endurance and a sense of duty, and both of them incorruptible integrity. But to command ten millions and guide sixty-five millions took an understanding of the world and a knowledge of Europe—things that are acquired beyond the purlieus of a General Staff ; over and above service and duty it took, moreover, a few gifts with which only geniuses are born—inspiration, fire, imagination.

Age, physical size and temperament excluded all sense of jealousy in the case of the older man, and the younger was shrewd enough to leave the glory to the other, for his ambitions ran more to power than to fame. True, afterwards he claimed all the glory for himself.

In no other pair did this relationship between Commander in Chief and Chief of Staff, based entirely on their personalities, take so felicitous a form.

Ludendorff's superiority by no means implies that his was the sole responsibility. Hindenburg never denied his own share. While Hindenburg received the full measure of Ludendorff's glory, he loyally bore also the full brunt of Ludendorff's errors. True he had not sought power,

but he stuck by the orders he signed ; and it would mean darkening the picture of Hindenburg's character if one were to attribute to Ludendorff alone any of the decisions that later determined the fate of Germany.

It was legend that set the two generals apart. For reasons that are deeply rooted in the German character, the people lifted only the one into the fame which he owed entirely to the other. Without that legend the war might have taken a different course, and the issue too might have been different. The dangerous consequences of this legend sprang, indeed, from the people, and thus must fall back upon the people, who sought a leader in their own image.

The first cause of the legend was the victory at Tannenberg. It was the first German victory of the entire war—a victory of the kind the people understand : the enemy enveloped, his army destroyed, more than a hundred thousand men captured. Everyone asked : Who was this victor ?

The first thing the Germans learned was that he was of giant stature, as strong as Siegfried, and at the same time as gentle as a child—a rough shell surrounding a tender heart. His head was ideally suited to be cast in plaster and confectionery—the calm eye, the mighty moustache, the carved soldier's countenance, appealed to everyone ; for they showed him to be at once old, aristocratic and forceful—huge, grizzled and sentimental. When they heard that he had at first been crossed off the active list, the Germans were completely happy. To be misunderstood and at the same time to be pure in heart—that spoke to the heart. Added to this was the melodious name with which he signed himself for the first time after the Battle of Tannenberg—leaving out the “ von Beneckendorff.” Thus he combined all that the Germans needed for worship—authority and calm, the visible impact of the man who commands and the invisible appeal of the husband and father.

What little he had said so far had pleased the people ; and when he said “ The war agrees with me like a watering cure,” he completely captured his soldier nation.

Since Ludendorff lacked all these qualities—he was neither tall, nor aristocratic, nor old, nor a happy father, nor did he possess a tender heart in a rough shell, but on the contrary was all sinister passion and ambition—he was honoured by the Germans as one of those necessary persons who, like a prince consort, are indispensable for the preservation of the institution. And since he was not in supreme command, he was overshadowed officially by the authority the Germans worship.

It was widely written and believed that the new general had engaged

in careful study at Tannenberg. Actually he merely entered a battle that was already under way and for whose continuation Ludendorff alone was responsible. General Hoffmann, Ludendorff's right hand, said later that after he read that Hindenburg had won the victory at Tannenberg, he no longer believed it was Hannibal who won the victory at Cannae.

Within a few months Hindenburg had displaced the Kaiser in the popular mind. The Kaiser's restlessness and speechmaking had been tolerated for a long time ; but now at last there was an even-tempered man who always kept his own weighty counsel. All this was new in German history and could hardly be compared with Bismarck.

This legend, which took form in the autumn of 1914, had the greatest influence on the ensuing fifteen years of German history ; indeed, it determined the war and the history of the Republic. Since Hindenburg had in the beginning achieved victory in a real battle, the people expected him alone to win victory in the war, relinquishing that hope not even after the defeat. This was in keeping with the German character, which likes to see matters of intellect transformed into matters of emotion, putting less faith in genius than in character and recognizing its ideal wherever simplicity prevails.

It is only occasionally that the Germans permit themselves to be dazzled by another type—the histrionic type of William II and Hitler.

## 8

THE TWO generals ruled for two years. It was the first time in German history that dictatorship was exercised, not by princes, but by a Junker and a commoner. When Hindenburg and Ludendorff in August 1916 took over command of the Army, Bismarck's Constitution virtually ceased to be in force. A situation arose similar to the one of to-day—only then it was the Army that protected the leaders, while to-day it is the Party. The dictatorship was fourfold in purpose. The two generals imposed a new war plan directed toward the West. They short-circuited Chancellor and Minister of the Interior by transferring to the military commandants of the provinces the rights of arrest, censorship and propaganda. They organized the economy of the entire Reich ; and finally they passed on war aims, peace offers, armistices. For all these



varied tasks, with the exception of the war plan, the two men lacked all knowledge and experience. Unlike the present Nazi leaders, they had no seven years of experience to draw upon. Thus they faced the same problems with the same power at their command—but with far less ability.

One other difference in the situation was that the Reichstag continued to be a factor. At first the good little boys had been sent home, after doing their job of authorizing billions. A kind of truce had been arranged among the parties. The German people gave this the romantic name of *Burgfrieden* (feudal peace), but the generals called it a "state of siege." In London, Paris and Rome the parliaments were in session, but in Berlin and Vienna they were closed—brief sessions were held for the sole purpose of authorizing new funds. "Politics has got to close down in war-time"—this pithy phrase from the lips of their Soldier King appealed to all the Germans, since they prefer dying for their country to thinking for it. But still a handful gathered and sought to gain influence, at first by means of petitions and delegations. The difference of opinion that in these years separated the dictators, generals and Junkers on the one hand, and the representatives of the Left parties on the other, concerned a negotiated peace, which could have been obtained from the Allies on two or three occasions. The dictators opposed this because they and heavy industry were out for conquest.

When they no longer knew how to carry on, they decided, in January 1917, on a new form of U-boat warfare in order to blockade Britain. Unhesitatingly they called it by a name that revealed its true purpose—"ruthless" U-boat warfare. People who knew America gave warning of its entry into the war, whereupon a Junker in the Reichstag said: "The Americans can neither swim nor fly—what can they do to us?" Even the Chancellor got up courage enough to declare against this decision. The very first day of the war the Kaiser had vested him with a high army commission, to spare him the embarrassment of having to appear before the Reichstag in civilian garb—naked, as it were. But when the Chancellor now appeared at General Headquarters and saw the shining medals and resolute expressions, he yielded at once and, together with the Vice Chancellor, signed the document he had just declared to be fraught with mortal danger. Here is the story of Luther all over again, though it must be said that, even before this, Bethmann-Hollweg had never betrayed signs of intellectual courage. Yet it is the story of Luther because the German relinquishes his convictions in the face of authority, especially when he spies red stripes along the trouser seams. The surrender

of these civilian officials and the silence of the party leaders proved that the dictators had no need at all to seize power. Power fell into their hands—because, while there was political talent in Germany, there was no “civil courage.”

In July 1917 the Deputies roused themselves and a Reichstag majority adopted a declaration according to which negotiations with the enemy were to be sought. To bring these civilians back to reason, the dictators and even the Kaiser now came to Berlin. Twice the generals met the Deputies. When such crises occur in other lands, it is usual for the generals to appear before the cabinet or the parliament. Here was a historical moment when the generals had to answer for their actions to the representatives of the people, who represented the majority.

But the German people, represented by this dozen men, had already lost the game at the outset. Instead of receiving the generals in the Reichstag, the Deputies called at the General Staff Building, where they were admitted by twos and threes, like families visiting the dentist. All questions about a quick peace were turned aside by the dictators, who pointed to the necessity for holding Belgium, and the coal mines, ore deposits and grain provinces in the East and West.

The next day the Kaiser for the first time saw the representatives of the democrats and Socialists—heretofore he had seen them only at a distance at the front, a grey mass. Now he derided the Deputies, who had been invited by a Minister to meet him, spoke frivolously of a second Punic War he was preparing against the British, and concluded with the words: “Where the Guards put in their appearance, there can be no democracy!” This was the course of the meeting between the two worlds. No representative of the people dared utter a word. King and Junkers laughed at workers and commoners.

When, about Christmas 1917, a peace without annexations was sought with the Bolsheviks, the dictators dispatched a general who demanded cession of the occupied territories and of a “Corridor” inhabited by two million Poles. Negotiations were broken off, and hostilities resumed for a brief while. There followed a German-dictated peace with cession of Livonia and Estonia. Soon afterward, in the spring of 1918, came the second dictated peace—in Bucharest. Rumanian oil, grain, railways, were to remain in German hands for ninety-nine years; the country was to be occupied for five years—all the terms of the sort the Germans characterized as “a shameful peace of slavery” when they were imposed upon themselves the following year. At the same time the dictators continued at the front what Foch called “the strategy of the buffalo”

—frontal offensives against a superior enemy, to which another half-million Germans fell victims. As late as August 1918, when Hindenburg had given up all hope of success, he continued the war, rather than averting disaster by prompt negotiations as he had been advised to do. The dictators have on their conscience every single German who fell needlessly during the last three months of the war. On the occasion of the crucial session at Headquarters they kept from the Ministers all the confidential statements they had previously made among themselves concerning the hopelessness of the war. Indeed, Hindenburg had expunged from the minutes even the one sentence that did not sound quite heroic enough. The dictators deceived the political leaders about the true situation, as bankrupts sometimes doctor their balance sheets. Whereupon the Ministers desisted from their demands, on the grounds “of having to bow before the greatest general produced by this war.”

## 9

SUDDENLY, late in September 1918, Ludendorff threw his cards on the table and declared that he must have an armistice within twenty-four hours. Like all the other documents, this one too is signed by Hindenburg. Thus it was he who was the first to demand a precipitate—that is to say, a disastrous—armistice.

But in this moment, when all was lost, the dictators discovered the blessings of democracy. Now that the Germans had been beaten, they were ordered to govern themselves henceforth. Now that their leaders could no longer conceal the bankruptcy, and needed someone to liquidate the insolvent firm, the German people were granted the representative government they had three times vainly sought during the nineteenth century. The desperate situation was communicated to a few party leaders, who now, at Hindenburg's behest, were to obtain an armistice within twenty-four hours. The Deputies were stunned—witnesses describe how they turned pale and burst into tears. But none rose up to reject responsibility for negotiation. Why, on this occasion, did courage fail the men who had been counselling peace for a year or two? Why did they not toss back the ball and leave the conclusion of a disastrous treaty to the Kaiser, the dictators, the Junker class? The day of reckoning had come. Now or never Germany could become a people's State!

But this time too, in the early days of October 1918, nothing of the kind occurred. With heavy heart, but without offering objection, the innocent took over the mandate of the guilty. A dozen citizens whom no one had consulted when war was declared or when it was culpably continued—the very people who had not been permitted to partake of the meal—now had to reach into their pockets and pay the bill. Prince Max of Baden, weakly and ailing, but one of the last of the knights, was named Chancellor. He refused to cable Wilson precipitately. Addressing a few questions to the dictators, he received the reply that all was over. The Junkers were suddenly invisible. The workers and commoners were to govern now—their hour had struck at last. "I shall be glad to work with Herr Ebert," the Kaiser declared. "I have nothing against Social Democracy. Only the name needs to be changed." Prince Max of Baden, the Chancellor, meanwhile became a democrat—perhaps he was one previously. He formed the bridge between the two Germanys, doing what he could.

Yet even at this point the Kaiser had not yet signed the new Constitution. It was his nature to evade such a formula. The new Foreign Minister urged him on and later described how the Kaiser, who wanted to change for dinner, left the paper unsigned on the table, walking toward the door. For four long years, Junkers and generals had kept the German people from assuming their share in government—for four years permitting them to shed their blood but not to offer advice. What the Kaiser had refused for thirty years—control of the government by the people—was now to be wrested from him by a dreadful collapse. "On the table," writes Minister Hintze, "lay the decree of the All-Highest, dated the 30th. I followed H.M. to the door and repeated that the formation of a new government depended on his signature. The Kaiser turned round, strode to the table and signed the decree."

In such casual fashion was German democracy established. Because it was handed down from on high, rather than won in conflict, it lacked inner strength and disintegrated within a few years.

It began with a blunder—the negotiations with Wilson, with whom an exchange of notes took place during October. Thus the distorters of history were able to offer the next generation the spectacle of democrats losing a war which they apparently had undertaken—else why should they have liquidated it in defeat?

Under the impact of these impressions a few small sections of the people and the Army rose up in rebellion—at first sailors in Kiel and Wilhelms-

haven, then Socialists in Munich, Franconia, and finally Berlin too. There was a similar movement in Vienna, for the Hapsburg Empire was likewise beaten and disintegrating. None demanded the head, nor in the beginning even the throne, of the Kaiser. The sailors' demands were pathetic rather than terrifying.

The troops had embodied the main cause of their dissatisfaction in this verse: "Equal food and equal pay, and the war would long have seen its day!" What they demanded was merely that officers were not to be better fed than the privates. What must the common soldier have thought when as late as 1918 he encountered artistically lithographed menus at certain tables? The knife used for the "stab in the back," veterans later said, must have included a corkscrew, a can-opener, and an ice-pick. True, in the battles of the final summer, the older soldiers, weary unto death, occasionally greeted the younger replacements with the expletive: "Strike-breakers!" For several years they had seen for themselves and heard the stories that passed from mouth to mouth. When they returned in tatters, the well-cared-for officers at the base greeted them as "front-line swine"; almost none of the thousands of reserve officers were permitted to move up into higher staff positions. The callowest lieutenant was permitted to roar at every veteran reservist—indeed, only because the army had been trained in Prussian discipline for two centuries did it not rise in revolution at the front. Not until early November did sections of the working class demand a republic.

At once the dictators resolved to fight no longer against France but against Germany. The armistice, after all, was being handled by the democrats; and as for the Reichstag, instead of remaining in permanent session day and night, it had voluntarily adjourned for a holiday on October 26. As late as November 8, there were discussions with the Kaiser concerning a march on Berlin, officially called "Operation against the Homeland."

But now came the moment against which the dying Bismarck had warned the Kaiser. The officers broke ranks. After three centuries of unprecedented privileges enjoyed by their families, none was found ready to die for his King. In vain the Kaiser cast about. He had dismissed Ludendorff a short while before. Hindenburg told him that the Army would no longer take orders. Knowing that his pusillanimous master was merely looking for a way out, the faithful vassal remained at the Kaiser's side, stolid and almost lifeless.

When Wilson's notes demanded abdication, and the same cry rose in Berlin, the new Chancellor, in daily and finally half-hourly telephone.

calls, asked for the Kaiser's abdication. On November 9, when the Chancellor had been half-heartedly assured of William's abdication "as German Emperor," he announced total abdication in Berlin. He could not have acted otherwise, for only under this condition did the leaders of the workers agree to make the transition without bloodshed. Without bloodshed, that is, after two million Germans had fallen in a lost war.

To the last hour, the Kaiser clung to his illusions, strutting theatrically before the glowing embers in the fireplace. But while declaring that he would march against the homeland to-morrow, he was already watching his special train standing ready outside the window—his sturdy power steed, white and gold, always ready to carry him out into the world, even if there could be no return now. To his son he declared: "Never!" But all knew that he would leave the next day. In the end he told the adjutant, who grew more and more insistent: "Very well, if it must be; but not before to-morrow morning." Whereupon dinner was served for six in the special train.

When the son appeared the following morning, the father had disappeared by car. At dawn William had fled to the Netherlands, and had been compelled to wait for six hours in a little corrugated iron waiting-room on the border before being admitted to exile.

That noon the news of the Revolution in Berlin reached St. Petersburg, where the German Ambassador, Count Mirbach, read the wire aloud at the table. The gentlemen turned pale as they looked at each other, laying aside their forks. Most deeply terrified of all, however, was the servant in attendance, a German soldier. He must have felt that at this moment he alone represented the German people and was called upon to do something. Should he cry out "Long live the Republic!"? Should he smash a plate? In his predicament, he decided that it would be safe to discard his white gloves. (Report of an eye-witness to the author.) So the German people continued to serve, bare-handed.

Other Republics have been founded under the stress of lost wars. Revolutionary France, in 1871, had to liquidate the war its Emperor had lost. The difference there lay in the will of the new French Republic to exclude the abdicated dynasty and class from power. Until this war the expelled families were banished from France. If the reverse was true in Germany, this was the result not of a bad peace but of the German character.

For with all its faults the Peace of Versailles was far milder than the two peace treaties the Germans had imposed upon their vanquished foes, Russia and Rumania, a year earlier. It was far milder too than it would have been without Wilson, who had risen to the status of moral ruler of the world. The treaty fills an entire book. If one wanted to condense it into a single paragraph, the essential provisions of the Treaty of Versailles might be given as follows :

Germany ceded Alsace-Lorraine to France ; Posen, in former times taken from Poland, came back to Poland ; a little corner in the West to Belgium ; Danzig became a Free City ; Memel went to Lithuania. In Upper Silesia and Schleswig plebiscites were to be held. Thus Germany's outright loss in Germany consisted only in the return to their former owners of regions with foreign populations—seven million out of sixty-five million inhabitants. The left bank of the Rhine and the Saar region were to be occupied for fifteen years and the Saar had to determine its own future by plebiscite. For thirty miles eastward of the Rhine fortifications were to be razed. There were to be large-scale deliveries in kind—ships, cattle, coal, railway equipment. There were to be reparations for war damage, in an amount that could not yet be fixed. There was to be disarmament down to a level of 100,000 men, 15,000 marines, and a small navy. The German Colonies were taken over, to be controlled, under the League of Nations, by different mandataries.

Nearly all this was in keeping with the principles Wilson had laid down for an armistice. There should have been a plebiscite in Alsace ; veterans' pensions should not have been calculated as part of reparations ; and German disarmament should have been followed by general disarmament. These and some smaller items were the mistakes.

But the Allies' greatest blunder was that they did not dispatch, the day after the armistice, a ship with food for the starving German children. Both Churchill and Lloyd George have assured the present author that they personally sought to do so the very first day, "but the country was too deeply imbued with hatred of the Germans." At the time, such a gesture would have won the hearts of millions of Germans, especially the mothers.

The moderation of the Treaty of Versailles becomes striking when one compares the demands France made of defeated Germany in 1919 with the demands made in 1940 by Germany of defeated France. No more need be said.

None of the Versailles terms was intolerable for Germany. The eastern regions were not beloved. The present author, who was born

there, near the border, was occasionally asked whether the region was not already incorporated in Russian Poland. Strasbourg is neither German nor French, but Alsatian. That was why it disliked the forty-seven years under French rule as much as it did the twenty years under German. Lorraine is so predominantly French that Bismarck did not desire to annex it. Both provinces could have formed and still can form only the kind of miniature principality of which there are half a dozen in Europe. The only border concept that has remained dear to German hearts is the Rhine. The Rhine has remained German.

The error of Versailles lies in the disarmament of one part only. To be disarmed alone, while all around the guns gleamed—that was too much for the strongest warrior nation. The German movement for vengeance was not founded on a concept of iron and coal to be reconquered; it sprang solely from the German sense of honour—an honour conceived to be equal to the honour of the sword. That is a consequence of the thousand-year-old evolution we have here traced. The German feels that he loses his honour, together with his sword, only when other nations are at the same time allowed to keep their swords.

Yet had the Germans been allowed to keep their arms and all their towns and provinces—had not a village been taken nor a single cannon—a Hitler would have arisen, not after fifteen but after five years; for revenge for the defeat was deep in their blood.

Nevertheless, in May 1919 Paris expected the conditions to be rejected. Nothing would have been more natural. In Weimar sat the representatives of the Republic under wretched circumstances, in the heart of a country that was still starving. Was their love of country any the less because they were workers and commoners? Who can be so bold as to say that one class is more patriotic than another? Yes, the door was open to reject the peace proposals of Paris, as Count Rantzau, a true nobleman, had done.

For the Germans had received two boons on which they had no right to count after all these years—Wilson and Lenin. The one brought a doctrine of reconciliation, justice and the League of Nations. The other was the enemy of Germany's enemies, ready to hasten to the aid of the new semi-Socialist sister Republic with his rising Red Army. If Weimar actually loved nothing more ardently than the fatherland, it must have accepted the unexpected ally, in order to continue the war against the equally exhausted Allies.

But there was capital's fear of Communism; there was the hatred of the leader of one sect for another; there was the fury of the German



Socialists over the fact that the Russians had liberated themselves by revolution rather than reform ; there was the revulsion in which the Catholic Centre held these Russian atheists. These motives of sentiment, hunger, property and resentment combined to make the Germans accept a harsh peace rather than continue the war by the side of the Bolsheviks. Thus it came to pass that the moderate Left accepted the so-called "Slave Treaty," while the nationalist Right, which bore the sole war-guilt, rejected it with a grand gesture.

This proud "No !" enabled Junkers, captains of industry and later the Nazis to eke out their political lives for a decade.

## 10

A FEW years after the upheaval a Prince of Prussia had his house furnishings auctioned off. In the process, the flute of Frederic the Great was to be put up for sale. A group of Potsdam officers resolved to preserve this relic for the House of Hohenzollern. They attended the auction, and one of them said to the Prince : "We shall not allow this treasure to fall into profane hands. We shall array ourselves as one man before the flute of the Great King."

The Prince looked at them coldly and replied : "Had you rallied round the King as resolutely as this on that November 9, the flute would not have to be auctioned off now."

The German Revolution introduced a curious phenomenon into history. Officers and Junkers, vassals and paladins, broke faith with the Kaiser when he departed. The only ones to keep faith with him were the commoners, the people. Respectfully they appeared before such of their princes as had not fled in the first panic, imploring them with embarrassed mien to make good their departure. When the Empress, surrounded by her grandchildren, in the palace at Potsdam, heard soldiers drive up and remembered the capture of the Czarina with terror, an emissary entered, stood at attention and reported in military tones, as he had been taught :

"Your Majesty is under our protection. Everything is under guard. We await Your Majesty's orders."

From none of the twenty-two German kings and princes or their sons, nephews and cousins—all in all there are supposed to have been

one hundred and twenty—did a German soldier or worker take anything. Not one of the thousands that made up court officialdom, high and low, was so much as touched.

It was the strangest revolution in history. In the end, Scheidemann proclaimed the bourgeois Republic from the Reichstag only because the more militant Liebknecht, twenty minutes earlier, had proclaimed the Red Republic from the palace. It was a rivalry between balconies that decided Germany's fate that noon. Ebert was "purple with rage" when he roared at his associate after the proclamation :

"You shouldn't have done that ! Only the National Assembly can decide upon the form of government !"

And then the mutineers, the sailors ! When they refused to obey, in the last days of October, it was only because after three years of life in port they were suddenly ordered to seek action on the high seas, though Hindenburg had pronounced the war to be ended. As for their demands of November 5, they included release of their imprisoned comrades, a guarantee that no unfavourable entry would be made in their identification books, uniform food, freedom from compulsory saluting when off duty, and finally a change in the form of addressing officers, under which the third person, "Herr Captain have ordered . . ." would be used only at the beginning, and "you" could be substituted subsequently. These were the demands of 80,000 sailors who had 3000 officers on board and all the guns under their control.

Order was so great among the workers' and soldiers' Councils that Hindenburg himself recommended their support. A few hundred undernourished sailors, who occupied the palace at Berlin for a matter of weeks, suddenly found themselves without leadership in the Imperial Cellars, which resembled a kind of Food Show, with all the things that German noses had not smelled for four years. Did they hurl themselves on the supplies and organize a feast ? No, they put a special Administrative Committee in charge, secured the doors of these fifty-four subterranean chambers with sentries armed with stink-bombs, continued to keep the careful accounts left behind by the Lord Chamberlain, merely distributing daily rations to their comrades. Later, when they set up machine-guns near the windows in the upper halls, they placed newspapers underneath to protect the hardwood finish. After the palace had been bombarded by their hostile fellows they arranged the rubble from the shattered walls in three heaps in the courtyard—plaster, iron, glass.

After the bombardment of Germany the citizens too were arranged

in three heaps : the old power, the new power and the communists. In this revolt the question was not which party had more courage but which had more fear. The barricades were heaped up not of stones and wagons but of dogmas ; the arms were not guns and cannon but voices and speeches. Thus there was a total absence of that vital spark which has decided all revolutions. Only where there was shooting—against the communists—was this spark present ; and since there were two against one, this contributed heavily toward the downfall of the Republic.

Here too the first steps were decisive. The German destiny was shaped in these first weeks of the Republic. So long as the old oppressor still has fear, looks for a show of power or a metallic sound, he respects the new power ; but standing in his place of concealment, straining his ears to listen and hearing nothing, he emerges smilingly, gently nudges his comrade and says : “ When there is nothing to fear, there is something to be regained ! ”

## 11

WHAT TOOK place in Germany during these years ? What could have taken place ?

A country in which for centuries the Junkers had epitomized the legitimate power necessarily cultivated a desire for legitimacy in place of a love of liberty. The German worker lost his Revolution, not because he was too nationalist in sentiment, but because he was too eager to “ belong.”

Thus the calm majority of the workers, like all of Germany four years earlier, was forced into a war on two fronts, hurling itself entirely against the one side, its own left-wing brethren, in the hope of becoming stronger and being able to turn against the old power after the communists had been vanquished. Too late ! The auspicious moment had passed. The old power had meanwhile regained its strength ! Such a dilemma may be called tragic ; at any rate, it is German.

The civilians had relieved the military aristocracy of the need for negotiating the armistice, thereby preventing it from carrying out any moral purge ; now the actual conclusion of peace was even more the burden of the civilians. Here a double shift arose. The bourgeois circles and the conservative workers, who governed the new State, in their

speeches and manifestoes, their newspapers and books, were for ever indicting the enemy for his forcibly imposed peace—never those who were really guilty because for years they had refused to entertain reasonable peace proposals. These latter had been accustomed to rule for centuries; they were shrewder and did not accuse the enemy, but instead the commoners, for having signed the peace.

The moral and political consequences of Ludendorff's masterpiece, shifting responsibility for the armistice, were tremendous.

Another factor in the failure of the Republic was the lack of talent in the art of governing among the new parties. In fifty years of dictatorship in the name, first, of Bismarck, then, of William and, finally, of Ludendorff, the political talent handed down from the time before 1848 and the ensuing conflicts necessarily languished. The Junkers had not learned to govern, only to rule, and as true officers they knew how to provide for replacements and new blood. The thirty or forty families that had been in effective command in Prussia for some two hundred years took care that vitality and money flowed to them from the State. They always sent a brother or cousin into the Government, recalling the Genoese and Portuguese merchants who once upon a time sent out one son with their sailing fleets to bring home treasure they could then comfortably sell from their offices. One Minister of Agriculture in Berlin was able to take excellent care of hundreds of powerful Junkers along the Elbe or Oder.

The new men who now came to help the millions of their party comrades acted with dogmatic conviction, but did almost nothing to prove to the outside world that Germany had changed, while they did everything to prove to the home front that matters were not as bad as all that. In constant conflict with their left-wing brethren who aspired to a Socialist State, they sought to carry on the traditions of the old world; they were much prouder looking backward than looking forward, and they saw to it that every measure for socialization disappeared in committee.

While neglecting to bring about the realization of their own ideas, the new rulers made it easy for their enemies to realize theirs. The people had been excluded from high office for thirty years, and thus the upheaval created a vacuum that could be overcome only by retaining the old civil servants. The resistance of a privy councillor in his special sphere of work could not be broken, least of all when it was a matter of salaries. It occurred to no one to give the well-paid jobs to the commoners instead of to the Junkers.

The old powers were startled at the sudden gust of air but quickly reassured themselves and at once closed ranks again. The new powers showed such respect for freedom of speech that they allowed the old to mock the new Government in their election appeals only six weeks after the upheaval. They permitted the first citizen of the land to be publicly libelled, and when the President took the case to court, the judge, his face disfigured by sabre scars, revelled in moral condemnation of the head of the State.

When the daring step of instituting the new flag of black-red-and-gold was finally taken, the old flag was retained for ships at sea, which flew the new emblem only in the form of a jack on top. Even at times when there was the gravest interference with the State power—in 1920, when the Government was compelled to retire, and in 1922, when the leading Minister was assassinated—the Government failed to use a firm hand with the veteran officers who had incited such acts.

All this became possible, not because the new rulers were personally of outstandingly weak character and could be personally indicted, but because their German character after centuries of submission to authority consigned them to weakness. Their uncertainty in society was stronger than their class feeling; yet years ago all of them had taken the field with deep sincerity on behalf of their class against the old social order.

The thing that counted was to acquire the few manners which every waiter masters within a few weeks, lest a smile curl the lips of an aged Excellency whom the new rulers failed to impress. The first President of the Reich, after a blameless life, suddenly at the age of fifty began to learn riding, because in old Europe kings had to appear before their people on horseback. Others acquired a sudden taste for hunting. One fashionable society lady boasted of having initiated a great Labour Minister into the higher secrets of love. Instead of standing at the tractor of the new age, ploughing their fields, they gathered the straggling roses of the nineteenth century.

## 12

HOW fantastically time surged on! New colours and sounds were perceived, though indistinctly, even by those who followed events merely with the roving eye and half-listening ear of the newspaper reader!

Twenty-two princes had relinquished German thrones. At the same time, having lost their land and power, they sought to save their money. They preferred to have their august names sullied by the humiliation of a "settlement," rather than renounce their millions for the benefit of a starving people—preferred it, even though such generosity would have been the best means for preparing their return to power.

Ten thousand alien soldiers stood on the Rhine. Dusky Moroccans aroused revulsion and at the same time fear on the part of fair-haired women. To collect his debts, the neighbour to the West invaded the land anew, and in a genuine surge of hatred the people, in leaderless groups, began to engage in guerilla warfare amid the factories, as though they dwelt in the ravines of the Apennines.

For four years the blood of millions had been shed. Now gold melted away in the wake of the holocaust. Gold had long been invisible, represented by common paper; but now even paper lost colour, shrinking in value from one day to the next. People hastened to squander the money the very hour it was received, lest it be without value the next day. Everyone tried to get the currency of one of the countries where all seemed still to be anchored firmly.

A new celebrity of short fame appeared on the German horizon: a certain Stinnes, an Aryan and a coiner of patriotic slogans, whose sharp eyes saw a few feet farther than others, at this time gathered in the mountain of paper, selling it beyond the border. He borrowed from the Government, paid the devaluated loan a few months later, buying in return whatever fell into his hands—ships, hotels, railways, theatres, mines—until he had accumulated the greatest gold hoard and immense power from the collapse of his bankrupt people. He even cheated the people of the inheritance tax before his death.

Thousands of young soldiers were recruited as had been the fashion three hundred years ago. They marched east to the Russian borderlands after booty and adventure, attempting to write in blood the title to the fields they sought to settle, only to be beaten back in the end. Returning empty-handed, they gave vent to their disappointment in leagues directed against the new State. Savings accounts melted away, insurance policies were null and void, legacies ceased to exist. The distrust of each against all led to the breaking of the oldest bonds. With new disasters bringing misery on a thousand men of goodwill, blows rained down on the Jew who, as a stranger to the country, was held to be the cause of it all, while he himself remained wealthy and happy in every respect.

When the imposed reparations could not be paid, broad-shouldered

Americans appeared on the scene, figuring up billions in endless conferences, building houses of cards for future generations that were to pay everything. And while the conferences squandered additional hundreds of thousands on secretaries' hotel bills in efforts to find a way out of the hunger of millions, suicides increased.

And yet, from such fantastic happenings the new rulers knew not how to conjure up a vision for the masses ! What distinguished the democrats with all their integrity from those who ruled the German people before, and have ruled them since, was their lack of imagination. After the grey years of the war the crowd wanted colour ; after the years of obedience it wanted ideas. Instead of emulating, like the dictators after them, the colourful example of Moscow, with new emblems, new names and new sounds vividly bringing to the crowd a picture of the new epoch, boredom yawned from the programmes. The basic programme, with its two thousand words, contained not a single word that was new or that held colour and sound. The worker was never given that sense of self-confidence that made him feel : " I am the State." The citizen was shown nothing that might have lured him on. Instead of reviving Hutten or Engels, the name chosen by the left-wing was taken from an ancient Roman rebel, Spartacus, a name that appealed to no German ear. No new songs and no new flag, no orator and no author, no dress and no gesture appeared in place of any of the old emblems of which the masses had been deprived. And yet a State cannot exist for any length of time without emblems, any more than it can exist without ideas.

The old rulers noticed it, winked at each other, and began to march through the land with cries of : " The Republic has sold our honour ! " At the same time they distorted the theory of Germany's sole war-guilt, which no one accepted, into a theory of Germany's innocence of the war. They began their work of telling the people that they had neither started nor lost the war. The ruling victors failed to intervene when such sentiments sounded from a hundred books and speeches. No one evinced any desire to refuse the beaten troops the title of " Unvanquished Army," if the people insisted on deceiving themselves. But the important result was overlooked, namely, that a decade of such education was sufficient to plant in the hearts of believing youth not only the certainty of German innocence, but also that of enemy malice and in consequence a thirst for revenge.

The sun that revived officers and Junkers was the *Reichswehr*. What was to prevent them from serving under the new flag ? A simple trick permitted them to retain their honour unblemished while at the same

time serving under a hateful banner they held in contempt as the symbol of the Revolution and the destroyer of royal power. If the first oath could be revoked so easily, why should not a second one be sworn with mental reservations? Later the Nazis insisted that under such circumstances it was actually a duty to swear a false oath.

The old officers were welcomed with open arms. Since there was no Trotsky, they were all taken back, and almost no new ones were added. In 1913 the nobility accounted for 22 per cent. of the Prussian officers, in the year 1921 the percentage had climbed back to 21.3. The missing 0.7 per cent. evidently was the measure of the victory of the Revolution. Since the reduction in the size of the Army made it necessary to keep out many thousands, the Government here too provided for the old officers. No pension was cut, no privilege withdrawn. After the War of 1870, a single sergeant had become a general; but after the World War and the Revolution none got beyond the rank of captain. The officers now took along their "proletarian chiefs" to their casinos and honoured them in seemly fashion, until they finally roasted them on the points of their sabres and devoured them. The War Minister felt himself splendidly protected from his hostile brethren by such nice officers.

## 13

HINDENBURG wrote his memoirs, or had them written, turning truth topsy-turvy. That on November 10 he himself compelled the signing of the Armistice with the words: "It *must* nevertheless be concluded"; that not a single document from those crucial six weeks contains any charges against the home country—these things, to be sure, the Germans were not to learn from his book. That book tells only of a cowardly Government and behind it an exhausted people as the cause of the catastrophe. To hammer it into the reader's mind with an impressive image, the epilogue says:

"As Siegfried fell under the treacherous spear-throw of grim Hagen, thus fell our weakening front."

From the lips of a thousand orators these words were repeated, they were graven into millions of German hearts. Youth had to believe them, for it heard no other version. The warriors themselves were fond of hearing them, for they excused a collapse no army could have escaped.



The citizens at home believed them because none felt that it was he who was meant, always seeing "grim Hagen" who stabbed splendid Siegfried in the back in others, especially in the Socialists.

The crucial importance of this statement in the weakening of the Republic was soon to become apparent. The old order now had a phrase behind which it could hide its war-guilt—it had the greatest authority in the land on its side. In official school-books the "stab in the back" as a reason for the defeat was traced back by the Republic to Hindenburg's words.

The dictators seemed determined to regain victory among the German people. In November 1919 they were summoned to a great spectacle from which important consequences for Germany's destiny were to issue. The commission the new Reichstag had set up to inquire into the disaster summoned the two generals. It was no tribunal—no judge was to condemn them like the courts-martial that summoned Benedek, Bazaine, Daladier for lost wars and battles. The Reichstag commission existed only to probe the historical truth and was given judicial subpoena functions.

To turn the examination of Hindenburg into a national festival, the nationalists resorted to every means—a special train, a guard of honour, a special escort delegation, two *Reichswehr* officers as personal adjutants, *Reichswehr* sentries. What a situation for the seventy-two-year-old Junker! For the first time in twenty years he had to give an account to someone who was not his King. These very men whom he must now answer—thus surely must have run his thoughts—were the ones who had driven out his King. Would he simply smash them with his mighty fists? No, he fished out a pair of horn-rimmed glasses, took up his sheets of paper, and began to read in the easy tone of a story-teller:

"When we entered the High Command, the World War had been under way for two years. Borne up by love of our country, we knew but one goal—to keep the German Reich and the German people from harm and to lead them toward a just peace. This required the firm resolve to win. Such a will depended on faith in the justice of our cause. Our diplomacy had failed! We did not seek war, yet we embarked upon the greatest . . ."

The chairman's bell sounded. Hindenburg started and broke off in the middle of a word. The unprecedented had happened. A man, indeed, a bell, had interrupted Hindenburg.

"I know but one thing with absolute certainty," the Marshal con-

tinued, "the country no longer backed us. Concern as to whether the country would remain sufficiently firm never left us. It was at this time that secret, planned subversion of Army and Navy set in, as a continuation of similar efforts in peace-time. The brave troops that resisted revolutionary disintegration had much to suffer from the insubordinate conduct of their revolutionary comrades."

Now it had been said ! To speak this sentence in this hall, the Field Marshal had set out from Hanover. Summoned to explain why he decided upon U-boat warfare despite America, why he had forced the Armistice, he was shrewd enough to accuse before all the world, in the innermost cell of the Republic, in the Reichstag itself, the party that created this Republic, that was its main support.

"The German Army was stabbed in the back. That is the basic fact in the tragic evolution of the war for Germany, after a series of victories of unprecedented brilliance on many fronts."

To this triumphant fanfare the wretched chairman had no reply ready ; even now he failed to come to the protection of the German people who had seen their sons and brothers fall.

When the modest civilian asked the two generals whether they would return in the afternoon, they declared that they were not in a position to do so. They never returned.

Six years later, in 1925, the name of Hindenburg shone in letters of magic light before the German voters. The death of Ebert, the modest commoner who had been the first President of the new Republic, made necessary a presidential election. The Germans had to go out to choose a new leader, and according to the dictates of reason such a leader should have fulfilled two qualifications—he should have been a man with a political cast of mind ; and he should have been a republican. Hindenburg failed on both counts. He was non-political in thought ; and he was a monarchist. *All the more reason !* shouted half the Germans. *All the more reason ?* questioned voices abroad. *But he is the victor of Tannenberg !* the Germans cried. If the Germans, to their sorrow, had no more princes before whom to come to attention—since the princes had left for parts unknown—they desired at least to be able to salute a gold-braided general. Thus the Rightist coalition put the deepest reason for the election into these words : "Hindenburg has made the great sacrifice of becoming a candidate. We regard it as the obvious duty of all Germans in city and country to back our Hindenburg with all their power." The reasons given for the election of Hindenburg were typically Prussian—the old gentleman's sacrifice had to be rewarded. The uniform

must again stand at the head of the Reich. Nevertheless, the election resulted in only a small majority for him.

When he entered the great hall of the Reichstag, the old Junker saw before him the colours he had learned to hate from youth. Black-red-and-gold had been the flag that had inspired his father and mother with terror in those days of Revolution when the boy lay in his cradle. To every Junker, black-red-and-gold was the hateful symbol of this Republic whose Constitution he was now to swear to uphold.

But he stood upright. It was from the hand of the little workman whom the delegates of the German people had elected head of their assembly that the man who had been directly elected as their head by the Germans themselves received the formula of the oath. Exactly sixty years ago he had sworn a long oath to his King, in which he called upon Jesus Christ the Saviour and submitted himself to the King as a vassal for all time to come. In his own fashion he managed to observe this oath until the time that he resolved to stand in his present place. Swearing a second oath now, he was no less likely to keep it—such was his firm will. And his mighty bass voice sounded through the hall :

“I swear by God the Almighty and All-knowing that I shall devote all my powers to the welfare of the German people, that I shall enhance what is of profit and turn away what is harmful to them, that I shall uphold the Constitution and the laws of the Reich, that I shall faithfully carry out my duties, and that I shall let justice prevail for all. So help me God !”

Toward the end his voice is said to have faltered.

## 14

THE WORST crime committed against the Germans at Versailles was the formation of the League of Nations. They had to wait for Hitler to free them from this spectre. The notion of supplanting might by international law cannot be forced upon the typical German mind, nor even the sentiment upon which such a notion rests. It had, after all, taken Germany two centuries longer than it had countries of equal intellectual level to abolish the robber barons by law. In the case of the Hague Conference too, it had been German opposition that had mounted highest. Had this militant spirit been based merely on the craving for physical combat, it could have found release in games and sport ; had it

been merely the craving to rule, it could have found its outlet in the struggles among the classes, in the competition of rising enterprise, in the rivalry of personalities. Such are the solutions accepted by liberty-loving peoples, who are nevertheless as courageous as they are devoted when it comes to defending their independence.

But the Germans have been impressed through the centuries with the ideal of authority rather than with that of freedom. They can accept such a solution deep in their hearts only when it is equipped with the power to prevail against rebellion. None of their great spirits was able to gain authority ; all of them were contested, at best merely tolerated as eccentric dreamers ; the teachings of Goethe and Kant lacked the means for asserting themselves. Even the Church had power only so long as it was backed by Rome's world power. As a true German, Luther had at once enlisted the support of the state power on behalf of the unarmed priest, nullifying the vigour of his original protest by assigning all power to the Government, denying the people every trace of control.

Where obedience and command are raised to the status of a social religion, the urge for liberty is supplanted by a will for submission—some may call it a sense of order, others the code of a lackey. The failure of the three German Revolutions—of 1525, 1848 and 1918—plus their rarity and brevity—cannot be mere accident ; it must be a symbol. Voluntary renunciation of rights that were fought for or could have been fought for is a characteristic trait that isolates the German character in the world, making it the ideal instrument for men to command, moulding the Germans into the most patient followers in the world. If they should be ordered to be Communists some day, the Germans will continue to live under their new flag with the same punctuality, obedience and genius for organization.

And now a new order was to be built up among the nations—an order based on law, negotiation and arbitration ! All this had been demanded by German minds for one hundred and fifty years, by Goethe and Kant, by Herder and Schiller, by Beethoven and Schopenhauer. But the fateful schism among the Germans, the distance between spirit and State, never permitted such ideas to approach the sphere of action. If two or three different versions of Christianity for almost two thousand years had utterly failed to break the Germans' faith in might, to wean their heart away from their pagan ideals—how could these same Germans now be impressed by an assembly to which each nation sent a few men,

there to decide with ink and paper questions their forefathers had always settled with the sword? How could the imagination of this warrior nation be captured by a new order in which its highest Estate was degraded to the level of the police?

A nation that saw and honoured in the uniform, wherever it appeared, the finest expression of its social philosophy—such a nation could not be converted to civilian dress simply because for once this uniform had been ousted by a powerful coalition. "Next time we shall win!" the Germans told themselves. Then they went home to rearm. That disarmament, which was inherent in the idea of the League of Nations, was demanded only on one side—that was the fault of the victors. We all know the reasons and need not reiterate them here. The Germans must have been doubly resentful of their lone disarmament, since they had been unable to bear the very thought of it even when it was proposed for all. When Kaiser William wrote, "*Ich scheisse auf die Beschlüsse der Haager Konferenz*," he wrote straight from the heart of the entire German people, except for a few thousand thinkers and dreamers.

At Versailles there were two paths open—the humane and practical way of universal disarmament, or the austere way of the conqueror. The first course was possible only if all disarmed simultaneously in the new League of Nations, if French and British dropped their distrust of each other, if Americans forgot their party strife. It was possible, since the victors, after all, were not aspiring to world dominion.

But if the second path was to be trod, if a peace in the German fashion was to be imposed upon them, their character had first to be studied, and in Paris this had best been done by Clemenceau. It was necessary to know that a people inured to obedience admires even in its conqueror nothing but coldness and severity, that the nervous character of the German yields before threats, while it interprets a conciliatory attitude as a sign of weakness and cowardice.

A middling strong peace was made instead, to be carried out in a conciliatory fashion. The legend that a mild peace could have prevented the second World War could have originated only in heads that had never studied the German mind. In the wake of a gentle peace without universal disarmament, the second World War would have come a decade sooner. Briand knew that—he told a friend of the present author that his only hope was to gain thirty years' grace for France. The Germans, in any event, wanted arms and revenge; and only universal disarmament and the threat of a League Army could have held them in

check. As it was, German self-assurance rose again in the face of an enemy who was retreating step by step. The arms they were forbidden held a magic fascination for them.

Ten years after arms had been legally barred to the Germans, they were more popular in Germany than ever before. Each party built up its own private army. What else could arise from such a state of affairs but a new dictatorship?

The official *Reichswehr* was the smallest among the armies. It was built up by the most interesting among the German World War generals. General von Seeckt belonged to those highly cultured exceptions that always existed in the Prussian General Staff—sometimes they were half mathematicians, sometimes half poets. This soldier too was out for revenge, but he sought it in the struggle between two armies rather than two nations. Even in theory he envisioned a small army. But in him action was, as with Hamlet, impeded by thought; and when in the autumn of 1923 he momentarily held all the power in his hands, putting him in a position to smash the rising Nazis, he held back. Later he actually permitted his influence to be broken by Hindenburg, who was hostile toward him.

German youth, miserable because it was not allowed to serve, flocked to the private armies. The *Stahlhelm*, under the presidency of Hindenburg himself, was more deeply wrapped up in nationalist claims than the *Reichsbanner* which ostensibly protected the Republic; but the *Stahlhelm* was also more strongly held together by tradition, and even the Communist Red Front showed more spirit. All stared entranced at a single word—neither sword nor victory, but *legality*. To do the unconstitutional “within the framework of the Constitution,” to murder the Republic forcibly but with a show of law—that was the typically German aim of the extreme Right and Left. The *Reichsbanner* in the middle looked to both sides and felt secure, since it was, after all, of legitimate birth. Everyone admired Mussolini, but no one thought of a march on Berlin, not even the then rising Nazis.

While all these armies marched through Germany to fife and drums, philosophical systems were matched at the meetings. All resembled each other in one respect—their destructive tendency. Apart from a vague “New Germany,” none sought to do anything but destroy. People were anti-Marxist, anti-Semitic, anti-French, anti-European. None except a few esoteric spirits favoured the League and reconciliation. At the same time pseudo-democratic societies for international understanding were formed, in which counterfeits managed to fool the

French. Hitler found all this ready-made. All he had to do was to elaborate on it.

The parties often drew blood in the struggles among their troops. All of them saw the goal of their desires in the Presidential Palace. A man past eighty sat there, surrounded by a clique of Junkers, generals and reactionary soldiers of fortune, firmly locked into his castle, the keys to which were held only by his son and his secretary. This Secretary of State Meissner, the most contemptible and therefore the most enduring among all the creatures of the last German generation, had his sole rival, as far as morality is concerned, in Herr von Papen, who committed his early crimes in the United States during the World War. For years figures such as these engineered the decisions of the man who governed at the head of the German Republic. Since Hindenburg was a Titan, and a Field Marshal to boot, he was able to blot out the shadow of the Kaiser, who had overshadowed Ebert, the little square-headed saddler with his civilian clothes. Hindenburg merely had to stand silently in the same spot where the Kaiser had once stood talking—and the Germans forgot the monarchy.

Just as it remains memorable in German history that in the emergency no Junkers could be found to protect their princes, so another fact indicates the degeneration in the princely dynasties. Out of twenty-two reigning families that had been scattered to the winds within a few weeks, not a single son or grandson rose in the course of twenty-two years to remind the Germans, by his talent and daring, or even by a single striking exploit, that they had obeyed these families for a thousand years. Just as a few hundred resolute officers of the nobility in the autumn of 1918 could have saved the monarchy, so a single modern prince of courage, even had he been eminent only as an orator, could have kept alive the monarchist spark, which was far from dead in the Germans. To-day it is too late, and whatever may happen in Germany, the princes will never come back. Hindenburg did what he could, counter to his oath, to favour the interests of the Hohenzollerns at the expense of the Republic.

Long before his appearance, the haggling over the Kaiser's millions had gravely impaired the royal ideal. This and the sale of his memoirs to the former enemy, together with his second marriage, for ever precluded the Kaiser's return.

It had taken six years to establish the royal debt, and it had taken the same six years to establish the royal claims. When twelve million Germans in a popular referendum now demanded expropriation, the President asked himself whether, as an Imperial Field Marshal, he could

sit by idly—for the Constitution forbade him to intervene. Thus he arranged the writing of a letter to an old Junker friend who had managed his election campaign and was continuing the fight for the Kaiser. He desired to communicate to his friend “my own personal views, to the effect that I fully share the apprehensions you have expressed. I have spent my life in the service of the Kings of Prussia and German Emperors. I need not elaborate to you that I regard this referendum as a great injustice, a regrettable lack of respect for tradition and a gross ingratitude.”

The next day public posters proclaimed this private apologia from the pen of its President to the Republic. What could Hindenburg do against such indiscretion on the part of his friends? He let the posters stand. The Germans learned how the highest authority felt about their ungrateful and excited intentions. And they seemed happy to hear the master’s whistle, now that they had ventured a few paces too far into the realm of liberty. Leave in misery and want our good King, who on that November day sacrificed himself solely for a juster peace—abandon him whose ancestors made us great! And though fourteen million voted for expropriation, the referendum was defeated, and in the final vote the Hohenzollerns, in addition to all they had received in cash in 1919, now got another 150,000,000 acres, numerous castles, and 15,000,000 gold marks in cash. True, the Socialists, the champions of the Republic, were somewhat embarrassed at voting openly in the Reichstag. They abstained.

Like every old man, Hindenburg stood up for the past rather than the future—especially since it had been a glorious past. When it was a matter of flags or the fortunes of princes, he intervened. But the future position of the Reich he allowed his ministers to decide. Could he be seriously expected to prepare for revenge? Could a temperament that had so easily survived the collapse, that had always yearned for retirement—could such a man at eighty be seriously expected to take the field once again? Hindenburg preferred to accept the peace policy of his ministers, rarely meddling in foreign affairs during those nine years in which he was for ever intervening in domestic questions.

## 15

IN ALL great national questions during these years of reconstruction, the German spirit, true to its traditions, remained severely nationalist.



The few scholars and authors who preached the gospel of Europe were treated no better by the Republic than by the Kaiser. This time too it was the professors who excelled in zeal against the new democracy. A few of them had been given the task of establishing responsibility for the collapse, and after six years of labour they had assembled a book giving documentary evidence of the guilt of Hindenburg and Ludendorff. At the time Ludendorff was fair game, while Hindenburg had become a national institution; by the time the book was to appear in print, Hindenburg had become President of the Reich. What to do? An editor found the saving formula. So far half of the committee had found only Ludendorff guilty. "Now that Hindenburg has been elected, matters are evenly balanced. I think we may as well delete the entire section." Thus in the seventh year of the research project the World War dictator was acquitted because he had meanwhile become President.

There were, indeed, true heroes—German men and women who, as in classic tragedy, preferred liberty to life or who risked their liberty. Liebknecht, Luxemburg, Landauer, Eisner thus found their end under the revolvers or heels of the then current Nazis. Toller spent five years in the penitentiary. Fritz Adler, who had assassinated the Austrian Minister Stürgk and had been subsequently convicted, to be set free only by the Revolution, handed down to German history in his defence plea one of the few documents in praise of liberty. A few noblemen too saved the honour of their estate—Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, Count Coudenhove-Kalergi, Hellmut von Gerlach, Prince Lichnowski, Carl von Ossietzky, Ludwig Renn (the pseudonym for an officer of the nobility), Baron Reibnitz, von Schönaich, and the poet Fritz von Unruh. At a few universities there were minds of European format, but both teachers and students regarded them with distrust. There were a few brave and clever Ministers of State in the short-lived Republic too—Rathenau and Stresemann were the best. In return the one was assassinated while the other was taunted to death.

Walter Rathenau at the head of German affairs can be compared only to Wilhelm von Humboldt. Both were called to government leadership from the realm of thought. With his profound knowledge of the German character, Rathenau should never have taken the step. He must have known that the Germans do not, and never will, tolerate a Jew at their head. That was why Ballin, head of the Hamburg-American Line and a friend of the Kaiser, had declined a similar rôle. But Rathenau's dream was Germany. Indeed, his passion for all that was Prussian

reached the proportions of fanaticism. With Heine and Lassalle he is the third great Jew who loved Germany too much. The pride with which he emphasized rather than played down his Jewishness did not keep him from desiring the Jews to merge completely with the Germans.

True, during the war he performed services for the Reich equalled by but a few. On the first day of the war he had foreseen the shortage of raw materials in the event of a protracted conflict, and in the service of the War Ministry he had successfully fought this shortage. A few weeks later, after the Battle of the Marne, his keen economic insight recognized the necessity for making peace, and he later presented his conclusions to Ludendorff. Ludendorff studied Rathenau's figures, which discounted any chance of success for U-boat warfare, and then replied: "My instinct speaks against your figures."

As Reich Commissioner in 1920, Rathenau, at a conference, brought about the first understanding with the victors, putting labour and production in place of billions. When as Foreign Minister at the Geneva Conference he won the German Reich for the first time a seat, a voice and recognition, the other delegates marvelled that such Germans existed. Rathenau refused to be awed and concluded the first alliance between Germany, which up to this point had been deserted, and Russia. A few weeks later he was murdered by the first Nazis. The grave of his murderer has become one of their places of pilgrimage. He had governed for five months—Humboldt for four.

This foray of the German spirit into the State was bound to end in tragedy. Rathenau was one of the profoundest thinkers and most cultured men of his time, equally gifted in thought and in action. He took the first steps toward reconstruction, toward rendering Germany capable of contracting alliances. At the same time, while the war was still on, he predicted and demanded in several books a "planned economy," a form of State Socialism. Hitler, whose followers shot down Rathenau, built up his economic system according to Rathenau's plans.

Stresemann (1878-1929), an orator rather than a writer, a practical man rather than a philosopher, suffered a more violent shock to his worship of Germany than Rathenau. Until late in the war his sentiments and demands were German through and through. His upheaval was so strong that he changed overnight, and thus he represents the best example of the handful of Germans who within themselves completed the transition from the ideal of might to that of right. His achievements in Locarno in 1925, his success in regaining the confidence of the world—these were important conquests, for the world grasped his symbolic

mission. It was Stresemann who succeeded in persuading the French to evacuate the Rhineland voluntarily, five years before the term that had been set. He found a man of equal goodwill on the other side, and his conversations with Briand resemble those rare shining hours that rise occasionally from the misty months of the northern winter.

## 16

TO GERMANY the billions borrowed in America and elsewhere had lent the appearance of a boom. At this time the names of the two Americans, Dawes and Young, were pronounced by the people with distrust, by business men with faint mockery. A few courageous Germans found enough spirit to call their situation publicly a fraudulent bankruptcy. The interdependence of world economy and new labour-saving machines, together with Europe's insecurity and the lack of integrity prevalent in German business, had within a few years shaken the foundations of what morality was left from former times among the Germans.

Until the World War Germany was by no means a country noted for corruption. In France one might slip a banknote into a document to curry official favour or haste in stamping it, but such a thing was impossible in the old Prussia. There the leading press, regarded as venal in France, was incorruptible. The officer, the judge, the scholar were at once poor and aloof, in the tradition of Bismarck ; and if the Junkers stole from the State, they did so under privileges vested in them by the kings.

Not until the officers under William II sought the hands of wealthy young women, with Industry and the Army reaping profits from each other and marrying into each other—not until then did Prussian principles begin to give ground. In olden days conquering hordes of all nations carried off what they pleased. But for high German officers to send home from conquered castles furs, paintings and rugs—that would have been impossible in the wars of Bismarck. In the World War it happened for the first time. It was quickly imitated, and to-day the officers ransacking France have developed it into a fine art.

The leaders of the new Republic were incorruptible. It was not they who were responsible for the prevalence of speculation among the German middle class. It was the example of the Government as a whole that swept away the basic morality of the Germans. The citizen, watching curiously as his Government used borrowed dollar millions amid the

public bankruptcy to build post offices, town halls and sport stadiums of a splendour that not even rich and victorious France could afford, wondered whether he might emulate this example. German aspirations have never been directed solely toward money, but always more toward title, authority, revenge, and especially recognition by the world. The Germans even to-day are too imaginative to see their ideal in wealth. That is why their ideal is so much more dangerous than are those of other nations.

The Junkers were always the class that was greediest for money, for they had been born with all advantages except that of money. A general of Hindenburg's simplicity, the son of a poor family that had had to lower itself to the level of the medical profession, that had even been compelled to contract marital alliances with Jews—such a man necessarily looked with secret envy upon the castles and estates of his wealthy fellow Junkers, and especially upon their hunts. His friends now conceived the idea of gratifying his yearnings in a manner that was to have world-historical consequences.

The East Elbian Junkers, from whose grasp the old gentleman seemed to be slipping in the bustle of Berlin, resolved to lead him back to his home, to organize a collection for the purpose of re-purchasing the estate of Neudeck in East Prussia which had belonged to his family at the time of his birth. Once they had him to themselves for the summer season, they would be able to confront him not only with their troubles but with his own difficulties as a landowner, to the end that he might do something for his poor, debt-ridden fellows. In this way the so-called *Osthilfe*, a government fund intended to aid and resettle impoverished farmers in East Prussia, was to be diverted to replenish the exchequers of the Junkers, in the name of "preventing the advance of the Poles." The plan succeeded. Worked on by the impressions of his childhood and in conversation with his old cronies the President was readily persuaded of the necessity for supporting the estates of the Junkers with millions from the public till.

The gift to Hindenburg was easily absorbed by the heavy industrialists. Such payments were simply distributed "per ton of coal and iron" and recovered by a few pence price-rise ultimately paid by the consumer, the German people. The people themselves would surely have been glad to present their aged Marshal with the estate, even had it meant collecting the money in dribbles. But the great gentlemen had their reasons for not letting too many in on the secret. Was not the octogenarian likely to die soon and hand down the estate to his son? Would not that son, under

the new laws, have to pay an exorbitantly high inheritance tax? It was a question of saving that tax, of withholding this amount from the bankrupt German people by registering the title to the estate directly in the son's name. Thus, while the estate was presented to the Marshal in honour of his eightieth birthday, it was at the same time presented to his son, so to speak, for the Major's forty-eighth birthday. Why should the man who had led the war and who now governed the Reich be the only one to fail to profit from the lack of integrity the war had brought in its wake?

He had a new Chancellor, a highly moral gentleman. Brüning was the last honest man among Germany's leaders. He drove his proud poverty and integrity so far that he not only cut his own salary but sent for a cab whenever he made a private visit, lest he squander his official petrol. When he began his economy drive on the first day, he looked about in the old Chancellery and asked the custodian why the fountains in the garden were always playing. "Under the Great Chancellor," the old man replied, "they were turned on only on Sundays." Brüning had them shut down.

But he shut down the Reichstag too; at least he emasculated it by means of emergency decrees to such an extent that the Constitution of the Republic was, with Hindenburg's full approval, in effect inoperative. A single article, written into the Constitution for use in extreme emergencies, now became routine throughout the year. Brüning's aims as a kind of sub-dictator under Hindenburg were unquestionably sincere but not at all democratic. With his pale ascetic face and his eighteen-hour workday, this tireless German of profound Catholic faith stood like a fanatical monk, a Savonarola, among the elegant horsemen in the Papen style, the port-reddened Junker visages, and the disappointed, careworn leaders of the Left, tottering toward the end. He was the only one after Stresemann to bring passion, knowledge and energy to the leadership of the Germans. And yet, he prepared unwittingly for Hitler.

For he too was handicapped by the great German weakness: Brüning worshipped the military. The war had at last afforded the delicate and unathletic man fulfilment of his dream of proving himself a warrior before his nation. He actually rose to the rank of lieutenant in the service. For three long years the Field Marshal, whom he did not know, of course, stood unattainably high above him. Now he was to speak to him on equal terms, Chancellor to President. His own words, not to be published for some time, describe the overpowering impression he, the

man in the leading government position, received from the man he should have dominated. Had not he, Brüning, thirty years Hindenburg's junior, spent his life in the study of economics and politics, subjects that were decisive now, but of which the Field Marshal, by his own admission, knew nothing? With such a distance—much greater than that between minister and monarch because it was more deeply felt—the monk necessarily succumbed before the hollow colossus. The intrigue-spinners in the Chancellor's Palace were quite equal to the job of taking Brüning in their stride.

They exploited him, of course. The re-election of Hindenburg, with which Junker interests were tied up, could have been put over on the people only by Brüning. He undertook the campaign at a time when he already knew that the old man would betray him immediately afterwards. "You can depend on Hindenburg's disloyalty," General Groener said at the time. Brüning had gained an excellent name for himself in Paris and London. He succeeded in almost wiping out the remaining reparations, and he came close to persuading the French to allow the *Reichswehr* to be increased to a strength of three hundred thousand. Together Stresemann and Brüning had, long before Hitler came to power, in effect cancelled the three most onerous conditions of the Versailles Treaty by agreement with the French—the Rhineland occupation, reparations, disarmament. In his later rantings against Versailles, Hitler resembles nothing so much as a clown pummelling a straw dummy.

At this time Brüning treated with Hitler too. He offered Hitler the Chancellorship at the expiration of one year, if Hitler would step back as an opposition candidate to Hindenburg. Hitler declined. Immediately after Brüning had engineered the Field Marshal's second election, Hindenburg sent him packing on the grounds that he was contemplating Bolshevik plans in East Elbia. In point of fact, Brüning had merely sought to withdraw a few *Osthilfe* millions from the Junkers in favour of the farmers. When Hindenburg presented him with a silver-framed portrait as a Christmas gift, he made the Secretary of State tell Brüning his wish that the picture should not be placed on Brüning's desk—but Brüning did not throw it at his feet. This lieutenant made Hindenburg feel uneasy, as did Hitler, who was only a corporal.

In the elections of 1930, Hitler's party had suddenly leaped from twelve Deputies to one hundred and seven. Henceforth he was a power with which every Government had to treat. The Constitution had been virtually suspended; a doddering old man functioned as President, a tool in the hands of Junkers and horsemen.

Anarchy surged through Germany's streets. Four armies, armed at least with knives, daggers and knuckle-dusters, howled through the squares, roared through the cities, beat a tattoo through the whole land. No one knew precisely with which army the crowds lining the streets sided. The crowd itself did not know ; for the slogans and programmes and names of the parties had long lost their meaning ; they rose from a thousand lips and faded into the empty air like popular tunes whose origin the whistler fails to recall. Processions and rallies, leagues and demonstrations, festivals and memorial celebrations resembled each other, in marching rhythm, from the Red Front to Hitler, as two field-grey hosts resemble each other, their soldiers ordered to fight it out. As in war, the masses had been driven into a struggle on behalf of their leaders' interests, a struggle that seemed senseless when the masses stopped to think about it.

This was shown by the fact that thousands of Communists went over to Hitler's Storm Troops, thousands from the Iron Front to the Communists. Real enmity was kindled only among brothers who aspired to the same goal while wearing different insignia, obeying different leaders. This was the situation among hostile comrades in 1932 ; nor was it any wonder, for the same classes were distributed over all four armies, with the workers dominating in all. In each there were unemployed, adventurers, swashbucklers, in each idealists and enthusiastic students. This array of German youth, whether under the banner of Hitler, the *Stahlhelm*, the Republic, or Communism, was no more than youth's naïve protest against the misery of a life for which they blamed their fathers and the incomprehensible war their fathers had fought.

The Republic had frittered away its substance, because it had merely carried out a process of liquidation, with neither courage nor imagination. It had started without fanfare and it ended without glory. The Red Front had squandered all its energies in the struggle against its own brethren, and it too had produced no leaders and no original ideas. In the *Stahlhelm* organization, the younger elements were bound to take offence at the style of living in which the older officers indulged.

The reasons for Hitler's success over all the others lay not in his programme—one half of that was almost identical with the Socialist, the other half with the nationalist programme of his rivals—nor even in his own special contribution, Jew-baiting ; they lay in his seductive oratory, his generous promises. Instead of putting off the masses with an indefinite future war against France or with the dawn of a new day for mankind, Hitler brought a "here-and-now" programme. He

promised to introduce universal labour service as soon as he should have power, first for half a million and soon for two million unemployed. All his listeners understood that. And when he next promised them to coax two billions a year more in value from the German soil by means of new methods, he glossed over the fact that this would require an investment of ten billions ; but the masses believed him, as in *Faust* they believed Mephistopheles when he proposed the blessings of inflation to the Emperor. When Hitler held out to them four hundred thousand homes a year, the construction of which would put a million men to work, they already saw themselves living in these homes.

The thunder of his programme, constantly pledged anew, also included the abolition of all unearned income, socialization of trusts, profit-sharing for workers, abolition of ground rent, and "there will be no exception for intellectuals and other property-owners—everyone will have to take up a shovel." The Germans do not like to render themselves an account of their dream-castles—they prefer to sing about them. Their romantic hearts are won over more easily by sorcery than are those of other nations. Thus they believed what they wanted to believe, especially since it was dramatized before their very eyes. True, they did not actually see the homes ; but there was the backdrop behind which they could sense them.

It was a Hitler tactic always to leave something to the imagination ; and this Wagnerian technique captivated the sentiments of even those whose reason gave them pause. Hitler never dealt in figures, never engaged in debate, always revelled in pictures of the future. This was something new and refreshing to the people who had for ten long years listened to nothing but figures telling them how much they and their descendants would have to pay. Verily, Hitler awakened new hope in a nation that has always been a poor loser and that has never learned from its defeats. With the instinct of a demagogue he shifted the blame for the years of weariness from the war to the Government, pointing to men on the home scene on whom the people could wreak their vengeance, a purpose much harder of accomplishment beyond the borders. It was not Clemenceau who figured as the arch-foe, but Ebert. The Germans had not started the war—they had been foully attacked by a hostile coalition ; the Germans had not lost the war—they had been stabbed in the back by subversive elements at home. Youth, lending an ear to every suggestive influence, was bound to accept both tenets with enthusiasm, drawing courage for revenge without, hatred for revenge within. Once one knew how to appeal to youth, youth was easily misled.



Big business too felt the impact of the great tub-thumper—for someone had to pay for Hitler's big show. Ironically enough the "captains of industry" began to lean toward the idea of socialization—they wanted nothing better than to be as mildly and profitably "socialized" as the big mining and shipping and banking houses who were even now being subsidized and bought out by the Government. The Siegfrieds of the Rhine sensed the approaching twilight of the gods and instinctively hired an expert Wagnerian to save them. Steelmasters, but hardly men of steel, they sensed that the rock foundations on which their structures were reared were beginning to slip away into the deluge, and rather than be swept away altogether by a second flood, they preferred to jump with their cheque-books to the last remaining dry land.

Brüning's dismissal in the spring of 1932 marked the beginning of German anarchy. Lawful government virtually ceased even then, though it was not formally liquidated and discarded in principle until the year 1933.

The tug-of-war between the people and the Junkers, the street and the exclusive clubs—one might even say between Papen, the President and the last Socialist ministers—this ensuing duel began with a farce in which the players were to cast tragic shadows against the background of history. For there was still this wretched Prussia with its democratic ministers.

Why did reaction succeed in gaining control of Prussia? On the one side there was weariness, on the other vigour; on the one side democrats, on the other soldiers; one side went riding every morning, the other sat wearily among its papers. Thus the whole thing went according to schedule. On the July day agreed upon Papen proclaimed a presidential decree declaring the Prussian ministers deposed. The Chief of the Berlin Police, in his formidable, heavily armed citadel, telephoned a few times, wrote out a protest, and finally permitted himself to be arrested and led off. In his memoirs he wrote philosophically: "And thus we awaited the things that were to come." He sent back the order suspending him until date and signature were all in good order; and he mentions that he offered a seat to the gentlemen who brought him the news of his discharge.

In the very courtyard of Police Headquarters, where on November 9, 1918, a lieutenant had broken his sword because his imperial general ordered him not to march against the rioters, officials and police officers now crowded against the windows, on that July 20, 1932, shouting: "Long live liberty!" They wanted to fight, but they were not

permitted to, because their superiors did not wish to spill the blood of citizens. The military leadership in Germany had already regained its vitality. Democracy, on the other hand, had been weary from the first moment. It melted away as it had lived, and there was nothing left to admire except the masses of the people that still betrayed enough spirit, despite their anaemic leaders, to stand ready for vain rebellion.

This inglorious exit did the German Republic more damage than could have been inflicted by any lost battle in the streets of Berlin. That day in March 1848 was never forgotten, for there had been fighting then. A structure that fades away after fourteen years may leave behind regrets but no songs of praise, unless it has been surpassingly beautiful. The German Republic's inability to survive is explained by its tired genesis of lassitude. Had it arisen from struggle and sacrifice, from passion, the German Republic would have met a different end.

The tragic element that emerges at this point is the realization that while the victors were infinitely superior to the vanquished in vigour and imagination, they built upon ideas of blood and race that belonged to a bygone era. The urge for power, unsupported by ideas of the age, can no more rule for any length of time than ideas that are unsupported by the urge for power.

## 17

THE AGED Hindenburg still held the power in hands grown shaky. But the strongest force beside him was no longer the *Reichswehr*; it was the popular leader whom he contemptuously called the "Bohemian Corporal." To lure him into the web by making him a minister—that was the trick the Junkers and horsemen felt confident of achieving. By legitimizing Hitler, they sought to exclude him from actual power. Papen's plan for Hitler resembled that of a man who seeks to end the rule of his mistress by marrying her. In the end, he prevailed upon the Field Marshal to send for the party leader in August 1932 and offer him the office of Vice Chancellor.

The interview was conducted standing and lasted six minutes. When Hitler likened his position to that of Mussolini, the old gentleman broke off at once. The next day he issued an insulting communiqué that aroused Hitler's thirst for vengeance.

The struggle for power was decided by money and had convenience

The Nazi strength had grown to 230 Deputies, but Junkers, horsemen and generals—the Hindenburgs and Papens—were not inclined to abdicate in favour of the Nazis. Toward the end of the year 1932 Schleicher, an old friend of Hindenburg and long a leading figure in the network of intrigue, was made Chancellor. His ability was impaired by his predilection for talking too much, a fatal weakness, now that all plans went awry. There was talk of bringing back the Kaiser, deposing Hindenburg, letting Hitler rule Prussia.

Industry, which had financed Hitler for such a long time, suddenly had enough of him ; it was afraid of his Socialism. Hitler, deprived of his accustomed means, saw his votes shrink, those of the Communists rise in an election late that year. In the Reichstag too the courage of the other parties rose, especially since the Socialists held a potent weapon in their hands. The truth about the *Osthilfe* had officially come to their attention through an investigating commission. By publicizing the manner in which Hindenburg had favoured the Junkers at the expense of the farmers in East Prussia, the idle and arrogant over the poor and hard-working, they could now strike a blow against the régime. It is likely that the Nazis, who were by no means friendly toward the Junkers, were in the plot. The evidence would have shown how the Government saved certain Junkers from their gambling debts, and similar dramatic incidents. Seventy per cent. of the money had been passed to the Junkers, to subsidize 13,000 Junker families. These things would have aroused indignation even among the good Germans.

To head off this danger was the main interest of the Presidential Palace in January 1933. The President's son and friends made it clear to him that his oldest friends were likely to be compromised, indeed, that he himself would be exposed. For the scandal would undoubtedly dig up the story of the President's own inheritance-tax juggling. When the old gentleman demanded that his Chancellor should forcibly disband the Reichstag Commission in question, Schleicher refused and was instantly dismissed. The honour of the Hindenburgs and their friends could be saved only by a violent coup.

At the same time Hitler found himself in a serious situation. The decline in his vote and the stoppage of his funds had suddenly placed him in a vacuum. The man who linked up these two emergencies, like the villain of ancient comedy, was the horse-loving Herr von Papen. By giving Hitler money and power the scandal could be avoided ; but in order to overcome Hindenburg's contempt of Hitler, Hindenburg's hand had to be forced. Papen, who sought vengeance for having been ousted

by Schleicher and Hindenburg, therefore saw to it that the *Osthilfe* documents, an important point of honour with Hindenburg, surreptitiously fell into Hitler's hands. At the same time he announced to Hindenburg's son that Hitler was about to attack the whole gang in the Reichstag. Hitler's appointment to the Chancellorship was the only salvation.

During those very days the deposed Schleicher and his generals decided on a coup for January 30. A state of seige was to be declared, troops were to march, Hindenburg was to be respectfully confined to his Palace, Papen and Hitler were to be arrested, and a military dictatorship was to be proclaimed. But Schleicher talked too much. The intriguers had the story wired to London, whence a newspaper wired it back to Berlin. On January 29 danger threatened from two sides for the following day. The much-feared *Osthilfe* debate was to begin before the Reichstag Commission; and the coup of the generals impended. Field Marshal Hindenburg was lost unless he appointed Corporal Hitler Chancellor.

At noon on January 30, Hindenburg appointed Hitler, the man whom he had refused to appoint before, a man whose power was waning. The Reichstag debate, scheduled for the afternoon, was forcibly prevented and the documents disappeared. The *Putsch* planned by the generals could not be carried out because of the excitement in the capital. Later, of course, Schleicher and his wife were murdered by Hitler's men. In the evening there was a torchlight procession—the first example of masterly staging. Berlin looked on in amazement. From Bismarck's balcony, Hitler saluted his singing, torchbearing troops, with Hindenburg looking on from a near-by balcony and happily beating out the march time. The union of the old and the new Germany had been joined before the eyes of Berlin.

From this first-night torchlight procession Germany witnessed the growth of an endless procession that marched throughout the land, singing and shouting, brutal and exultant, fiery and destructive like an elemental force. For weeks the work of all these millions seemed to stand still, while the great spectacle of joy and vengeance held them spellbound. The self-assurance that the tribune had given back to the Germans burst out in atrocities, and the fury with which they hurled themselves upon the once mighty unfolded into ecstasy. An entire nation at last fancied itself admitted to the Garden of Eden, turned once more at the gate to hurl itself upon those who had barred the way. In the ecstasy of the struggle outside the gate none took note at the time that only the old wintry garden lay beyond.

All this was the work of a single man who from his magic cell unloosed words, words, words, amplified a millionfold with a magic device, dinning them into the ears of a people that demanded new formulas. With grandiose vision Goebbels let loose upon an entire nation a cascade of fireworks, a barrage of curses, a surging flurry of flags. With the power of a giant automaton he kept bellowing at them that they had been liberated yesterday, until they believed it.

Their victory in the first and last election under Hitler only served to inspire the Nazis to obliterate all parties, to establish themselves as the State. They already had their hands on its organs, and, now that there was no more limit to the means at their disposal, everything undertaken by others necessarily faded into insignificance. The brightest light emanated from the Reichstag, which the Nazis set on fire. The Reichstag, a majority of which consisted of obedient party hacks, had surrendered all power to the Cabinet, which in turn served only as the chorus for the soloist. In three lines the power of the German Reich had formally passed to eight Ministers. In truth there was but one.

## 18

ADOLF HITLER bears an important resemblance to earlier German emperors. He resembles Barbarossa in cruelty, Henry VI in the habit of blackmail. He shares with Sigismund the art of lying, with Wenceslaus the enjoyment of persecuting the Jews. His theatrical bearing reminds one of Otto III, his mystic faith of Charles VI. Of the Prussian kings too, who resided in Berlin before him, Hitler has many characteristics—the showy architecture of Frederic I, the lack of all education of Frederic William I, the sexual impotence of Frederic the Great, the belief in his artistic calling of Frederic William IV, and the faithlessness of most of the Hohenzollerns.

Yet despite such a character he exhibits very great talent. What lends wings to Hitler's fanaticism, leading it to great fulfilments, is his imagination. His ideas of what influences the individual or the masses seem to rise from an unerring prescience rather than from experience. This power enables him to grope his way forward, becoming all the more insistent whenever someone seeks to dissuade him. Decisions like the reoccupation of the Rhineland arose from vision and from fanaticism. He sensed that the French would not march and believed

doubly in his presentiment because the generals, traditionally unimaginative, predicted the opposite. While it is certain that he plans none of his campaigns himself, permitting the skill and the traditions of the German General Staff to prevail, it seems equally certain that he makes bold political decisions himself. In this sense he has the advantages of the highly gifted fanatic over the expert.

Yet he never employs persuasion, rarely flattery, generally threats, and always lies. He seems to regard fear as the strongest emotion in most men, discounting the possibility of courageous resistance because he himself is able to overcome his innate fear only by main force. In this respect he represents the opposite of Bismarck, who was self-reliant and impressed his enemies by his intrepidity. Bismarck never had to roll his eyes, or bellow at anyone; he inspired awe by merely standing there. Hitler combines the faculty of the quick decision that takes everyone by surprise, with a patience that is calculated, and that waits years for the right moment. These gifts, together with his ability to shift and combine, make him a first-rate tactician. By adding all the arts of ballyhoo to the mystic faith in his mission, by advancing his passionate vision with ancient stage tricks that captivate the crowds from within and without in turn—by such fusions he blends in himself the Middle Ages and the twentieth century. There is no precedent for a statesman communicating his programme of conquest to the world many years before he is able to put it into effect—and then, subsequently, being able more or less to realize that programme.

Turning back from his talents to his character, we find that its typically German elements lie in three traits—his belief in violence, his vengefulness, and his sense of insecurity. These three traits remain constant in him. Germany, race, anti-democratism, anti-Semitism, are ephemeral and could be reversed. Had he grown up among the Reds, he might have become leader of the Communists; to-day he is half on the way.

It is rare in a life story still in the making that one can with such certainty and at such an early point discern the influence of personal experiences on the formation of political theories. Hitler's dogmas are all consequences of his personal frustrations. Because he is of very poor racial stock, as the greatest German expert on race testified to his face in court, he persecutes the mixed races. Because he comes of people who were maltreated by Austria, he hates Austria. Because he suffered want in his youth, he hates the rich. Because he vegetated in Vienna shelters supported by Jewish money, he hates the Jews. Because he was refused admission to the academy for lack of talent, he persecutes the

style of painting that was then in fashion. Because the art of living has been denied him, he hates the French, who excel in that art. Because he is ill at ease in the presence of women, he banishes them from public affairs. Because he has learned nothing, he hates the intellect.

With so much hatred—whom, then, does Hitler love? Bismarck, the great hater, in the end loved old trees, animals, and his wife—he lived with his family. Hitler, who denies all natural bonds to the past and the future, loves neither nature nor beauty nor liberty. Unlike other dictators, he does not even love power to build with devotion—only power to subjugate. This is no ordinary vanity, nor plain ambition. It is a lifelong, insatiable thirst for vengeance on those whom he once had to envy because theirs was the greater wealth, power and security.

Thus Hitler enacts before our eyes the tragedy of the under-privileged who attains no inner peace even in a career without precedent. His features express this—the shifty eyes for ever on the alert for victims, the affectation of moustache and lock—these are the make-up of a man who would appear strong. When the moustache of William II is painted into Hitler's official portrait, the resemblance between the two neurasthenics becomes striking. Unlike earlier dictators or even Mussolini, we have no reports presenting Hitler in a tranquil mood—he is always either wrought up or brooding. He is a man always on the run, and this restlessness makes him thoroughly German.

And yet it is this very morbid passion that swept him to the top. For in the absence of any knowledge of countries and languages, of alien customs and literatures, only a clairvoyant could have foreseen with such certainty that French democracy was rotten while the British was not. Long before he came to power he sensed the impending collapse of France, which he then promoted and prepared by psychologically correct means, until finally the 1940 campaign against France, with its collaboration of all available means, represented a masterpiece. Yet as late as August 1940 the same man passionately resisted an attack on Britain, not on but against the counsel of his generals—indeed, he lost two precious months for this reason. Memories of Napoleon and William II may have had their share in strengthening his presentiment that he would meet with failure in the case of Britain.

Such clairvoyants, who, at other moments, are comedians, can attain their greatest successes only when they find men suited to their purpose. Hitler's first instinct took him to the Prussians. He sensed that no one would accept a figure like himself, and at the same time that only the classic nation of obedience would be capable of realizing his idea.

That was why Hitler's successes were so much greater and faster than those of Mussolini.

The Germans have always had a weakness for this mixture of amateur acting and romanticism, the last time for William II, the resemblances to whom we have outlined (pp. 311-12). The sudden change from genuine emotion to emotional exhibitionism, arising from the insecurity of his character, invests the leader, in the eyes of the German, with a special intensity that seems comical to more vigorous or cynical peoples. For that reason no non-German, even if he speaks German well, can grasp Hitler's effect on the masses, when listening to him on the radio.

Yet Hitler has simply and solely talked himself into power. The Germans have produced such great composers and actors that the third form of audible art, oratory, has evaded them. One must go far afield to find orators among the German people. This phenomenon runs parallel to the lack of revolutions. Since Lassalle—that is to say, for eighty years—there has hardly been a single orator. William II lacked the radio and the habit of speaking to the people. Without the radio Hitler's power in its present form would hardly be possible. True, the invention is equally open to all, but it must be considered that even Napoleon could have done much more with the telegraph than his enemies; by its aid he could have directed the battles in Spain from Moscow. The Germans can be captured only through the imagination, never by logic; thus, in a new leader who at first came unarmed, the Germans succumbed to the ubiquity of sound. One of the greatest tricks was that millions heard him without seeing him, for his advisers must have recognized the weakness of his personal appearance, which strongly invited parody.

The main factor that decided Hitler's success was that he brought back to the Germans all the things they had so sorely missed for fourteen years. He promised arms to the warrior nation and at the same time he revived processions and flags. In short, he seemed to be a combination of Frederic the Great and Wagner, and he had the effect of a saviour. After an epoch that had lacked all imagination, at last a stream of banners descended upon the Germans, commands rang out, fanfares sounded, a great pyramid after the model of the old was built up by the Nazis, with a hundred titles that could be abbreviated, with a thousand stones and steps on which one could ascend and descend with insignia on the sleeve, a new cap, and especially a pair of riding boots, though no horse was in the bargain.

All this was done in the image of Wagner—continual processions,



an everlasting melody, a few persistently reiterated themes, pure innocence, and demons lusting for revenge, knights in shining armour and vassals marching in time, vows and promises of loyalty unto death, a mixture of brutality and mysticism, heroism to suit the little man—in this way Hitler translated the military Estate into Wagnerian terms. With his subtle feeling for the German soul, he gratified both its dreams—obedience and music, discipline and emotion. Thus he shines through the dim world in which the Germans like to combine the victory of the great with their own profit.

The overwhelming art of propaganda which the resourceful Mephistopheles among them contrived was wholly new to the Germans. Never had they been flooded by such a masterfully directed stream of speeches, symbols, celebrations, insignia, in which all the old institutions, from the chancellery of the privy council to the bowling club, seemed to outdo each other. Praised and roared at in turn by this persuasive machine, Germany felt safe and sound in the arms of a mighty master, just as certain women do in their dreams. After fourteen painful years responsibility at last dropped away from the Germans; at last there was someone to command. Hitler gave the Germans back their ancient right to obey, not their self-assurance—that they had exhibited to the world long before him, whenever they rode blaring and fault-finding through foreign lands. Only Hitler gave back to the small bourgeois a sense of his own value, something neither the wealthy middle class nor the class-conscious workers had granted him.

A weak man who has spent a dull, shadowy youth ridden with spells of depression can accomplish such things only by virtue of a nervous energy that at certain hours solidifies into grandiose action, only to slacken completely and as suddenly. Where else could Hitler find his sudden surges of an energy that carries all before it than in a fanatical faith in his cause? Does he not lack all other resources? His lack of education is not merely a biographical accident; it is his principle, and it is this enmity toward the intellect that chiefly distinguishes him from the Bolsheviks, who worship knowledge. In the year 1923 the beaten, impoverished German Republic printed more than 32,000 books; in 1939 the flourishing Nazi Germany printed only 20,000.

That is why Hitler is the greatest example in German history of the schism between the spirit and the State. For a thousand years the German State had held aloof from, though it had tolerated, the spirit. It had assigned the spirit, like the American Indians, reservations in which it was rarely disturbed. Hitler is the first German to fight and suppress

the spirit on behalf of the State. He turned the anti-intellectual sentiments of a hundred kings and princes into a cult.

Hitler outdid even the most dull-witted in his complete "courage for illiteracy," as he once put it. Never before has a book like his own, written in such pedestrian and unimaginative German, become famous—its quality, by the way, is notably enhanced in translation. On not a single one of its seven hundred pages is there an image drawn from the life of the people, a simile taken from farm, factory, sport or history, or from anything bearing the vividness of life.

The political books and memoirs of many a king may have been written by others, but surely *Mein Kampf* comes from the hand of its avowed author—at least it shows the same hand as do his speeches. These platitudes and slogans, previously done to death in a thousand editorials, have their effect on the inchoate German masses when they are spoken, shouted, bellowed, but the reader of the printed book is less tolerant. This is no uncultured diamond in the rough, uttering forceful sentiments. The style is that of a third-rate provincial newspaper hack. Hitler's style and his portrait are sufficient to remove him permanently from the Napoleon class.

Yet it remains astonishing that Hitler has been able to make many personal conquests even beyond the popular masses. The fact that the professors followed him is merely a recurrence of a phenomenon which the present book has continuously reported. The fact that almost all the writers surrendered accords with the habits of German thinkers from Luther to Kant—habits that have been described here. But that Hitler, the civilian, won over the generals—that is his most amazing conquest.

It cannot be explained by the bare promise to give them all jobs, money and honours. It would appear that his fanatical faith took by surprise these men, who are cynics, like their forefathers and their class, men who have always managed to live on quite happily after lost wars. With one exception that has been mentioned, German history knows no generals who committed suicide or went mad after a defeat. Prussian generals, moreover, are strangers to the deep hatred which Hitler developed from his frustrations. They are gruff, but they do not hate; and when they do hate, it is their superiors, not the enemy. And now came this hysterical man with his passion, declaring without proof that France was rotten and Austria ripe for the fall. For the first time a civilian added passion and vision to the tanks and the guns, the marching plans and mobilization schemes. Evidently it was this which impressed the generals.

At the same time Hitler never dares admit his veneration of power and force. His sense of inner insecurity leads him to whine and complain about his peaceful intentions—that only deceit on the part of the perfidious English made him reluctantly reach for his sword. Herein lies the crucial difference from the proud amorality of the Renaissance, the Borgia and even Nietzsche.

It is his passion that impels him to cruelty and lies. In his own way, he undoubtedly acts in good faith when having innocents murdered, friends cheated or defenceless countries assaulted. The thought of world-dominion excuses the means, whatever they may be. Indeed, he would call himself weak, recognize himself with terror, were he ever to be magnanimous. This vehemence in destruction, this furious hatred of all that is successful, sound, beautiful, without being subject to his authority—these are always the symptoms of men that lack self-confidence. He risks everything on a single turn, as on the bloody night of June 30, or the reoccupation of the Rhineland. Yet he himself turns tail before a single weapon, as on the November day of the Munich *Putsch* (1923).

A nature of this kind—the clinical picture has been projected by physicians, authors, indeed, the patient himself—must create a private life for itself to conserve body and soul, to strengthen itself for its rare outbursts. The blindness, of hysterical origin, with which terror struck him for several days during the World War, and for describing which a Heidelberg professor was later dismissed, may have served him as a warning. His weak constitution needs to rest and gather strength. It lapses into long periods of lassitude, like an actor lounging about during the summer vacation without betraying a trace of his talent. Thus there is no sport for Hitler, no wine, no hobby; and when he does for once encounter a woman, with whom to put his virility to the test, the end is flight or death on the part of the woman, as in the case of his niece. A man who can drive no car, ride no horse, swim no river, use no skis, who can have neither wife nor children—such a man, in return, is able, at decisive moments, to act with the power peculiar to certain artists who instinctively impose similar restrictions upon themselves.

Since this fanaticism has risen from personal disappointments and the envy of happier men, the desire for self-assertion undoubtedly stands at the beginning of Hitler's career, a motivation found in many other active men. That is why Hitler's success was painfully built up and restlessly earned. True, such great success was possible only among the Germans.

## 19

NEVER before did a dictator get his hands on such willing masses, on so wonderfully humble and pliable material, as did this first illicit leader of the Germans. Napoleon met with much greater resistance from his people, and so did Mussolini. All that has been related and interpreted in the preceding three hundred odd pages proves how ardently the Germans, suddenly liberated against their will, waited fourteen years for a master to take them into his power. The few exceptions—the splendid clergymen, pacifists and Trade Unionists who were locked up and killed for their convictions—add up to not even one in every thousand Germans.

The best known of them, Martin Niemöller, the German hero of this epoch, has a face that reminds one of Dürer's pen. He is a Westphalian, the son of a minister, an enthusiastic sailor, and a man of profound faith. During the first World War he covered himself with glory as a U-boat commander, and the war failed to precipitate him into inner conflict, for his faith in Germany is as firm as his faith in God. After the Revolution an uncle helped him to take over a farm, and his first close contact with agricultural workers who regarded themselves as Marxists moved him profoundly. He came to the conclusion that souls were more important to him than tilling and harvesting the soil. He became a student of theology, taking instruction in Hebrew, though at the same time ardently championing the German cause. A commander in the student defence corps, he fought in the Kapp *Putsch*. He was already thirty when he delivered his first sermon in Münster, and so bitterly poor that he had to do hard manual labour, including laying railway tracks. His dual nature, his crusader spirit, deeply devout yet romantic and always patriotic, led to many inner conflicts, though it did not reach a crisis until Hitler demanded an oath of personal allegiance from all German ministers. Together with a few of his colleagues, Niemöller protested. An attempt was made on his life, and there were daily demonstrations in his favour by a congregation that sensed a strong man at its head. But the persecutions continued, ending in dismissal. No longer permitted to preach, Niemöller gave instruction in his home. He was arrested, tried, acquitted, rearrested and sent to the concentration camp. There he declined a pardon offered on condition that he refrained from preaching.

After the outbreak of the war, however, he is supposed to have volunteered to command a U-boat.

That offer reveals the division in the German soul in its full tragedy. Here is a man of dauntless courage and convictions, a man resembling Luther in staking his life for his convictions, a man preaching against Nazi theories, a man unswerving in his refusal to swear allegiance to another as though he were God. Yet this same man is ready to dive into the sea, under the hateful flag of this very blasphemer, to fire torpedoes on Germany's enemies.

Homesick *émigrés* tell the world that Hitler is not Germany. Yet did not all Germans vote for him again and again? Even though a certain percentage of the electorate was cowed by threats, the overwhelming majority voted for him of their own will. To-day the Germans suffer the pangs of hunger while they listen to the blandishments of the theory of world dominion. As we add these last pages, in September 1941, the butter and meat rations in Germany grow smaller, as the Germans conquer more and more countries. Even the theory of the have and the have-not nations has been reduced to absurdity by its inventor, for what wealth did the invaded Danes, Norwegians and Poles possess that Germany did not have itself? The Germans remind one of the dog in the manger who is unable to eat the grain but keeps barking to prevent the horses from feeding. What then did the Germans get out of eight years of Hitler?

He put to work millions of unemployed, because he prepared and waged war; and this is one of his reasons for continuing the war. He seems, furthermore, to have overcome the last traces of enmity among the ancient German tribes, to have perfected the union of the Reich in a form never attained by the Republic after the elimination of the princes.

Hitler has harnessed the Germans into an order no other people would tolerate, especially not the Italians, and only part of the Russians. No one can put up with a complete loss of liberty, and yet many nations fighting the Nazi system will absorb some of its methods, as it absorbed Russian methods.

Unquestionably the Germans to-day think along modern lines, in terms of machines rather than gold. They have shown the world that it is possible to live, fight and conquer without gold, that the engineer can live without the banker, but the banker not without the engineer. Indeed, they owe their victories to their defeat of the business ideology

that dominated the old democracies up to the time of the war. To produce what is necessary to the community rather than profitable to to the individual—that is a thought that reached Berlin from Moscow and that begins to pass from Berlin into the whole world, because it is timely. It ought to be possible to accept this principle without loss of liberty.

Nor do the Germans in the mass deplore the shackles on the spirit. When did they ever grant the spirit the decision or even an influence on the conduct of public affairs? A nation that has for a thousand years borne whatever authority was imposed upon it, that never fought of its own will for its freedom, that quickly sought its way back under the yoke when it attained freedom against its will—the world ought to grasp that this German nation as a whole shows no inclination to change. The first error to which we succumbed when we believed after the World War that a new Germany was possible—that first error should protect us against a second.

That the Germans are behind Hitler is proved by the persecution of the Jews. When the world heard of the first German pogroms, there was widespread testimony that in many places the crowds had held back. Yet the increase in Jewish persecutions from the year 1933 to the year 1938, from the first boycott to the march into Vienna and the November pogroms, shows the extent to which they belong to the German character. It was by no means only Storm Troopers who carried out the orders of their party. Wealthy citizens, German professors, independent sportsmen took part in the nocturnal assaults at the time, from passion and lust.

Why are the Germans, not as a government or a party but in the mass, more hostile toward the Jews than other nations? As Arndt, the passionate patriot, wrote with deep insight: "The German loves to weigh down with chains even the soul of a shackled galley slave." The German is a poor loser—so much so that he cannot bear success in others. The Russians directed their pogroms against poor unknown Jews, but the Germans turned on the wealthy and talented ones. It was not the ghetto that put them in an ugly frame of mind, not the alien faces and gestures, but the honour and influence acquired by Jewish bankers, the fame that surrounded great scholars and artists.

With envy they followed the rise of the German Jews, ever since their emancipation. Why were their theatres and newspapers the best? Why was it they who produced great medical discoveries, outstanding surgeons, ingenious new methods, brilliant books—to a far greater degree in proportion to their numbers than the non-Jewish population?

Into this general distrust of the people the Nazis now carried the legalization of brute force, the end of lawful government, the unrestrained will of youth, hungry for murder and booty. Who else was there, during Hitler's beginnings, who offered a better target for attack? The Jews combined all the qualifications of privileged victims—they were unarmed, well-to-do, easy prey to defamation. Murder and robbery could be practised at once on these people. For fourteen years the Republic had listened idly as members of the German middle class said and wrote publicly that the Jews had first started and then lost the war, since like the Socialists they put international aims in the place of national sentiments. Under the Republic six per cent. of the Ministers were Jews—three had a part in the Revolution. On the other hand, German Jews received twenty per cent. of all Nobel Prizes conferred on Germans. All this was suppressed, as were the facts that they, who made up but one per cent. of the German people, furnished 100,000 soldiers for the war, of whom 12,000 fell in action. Perhaps the lowest act ever committed by the Nazis was their removal of Jewish names from provincial war memorials that held the names of the fallen in letters of gold. But we have the same contempt of born Jews, as Baron Oppenheim, von Weinberg, General Milch, Chief of the German Air Force, author Arnold Bronnen, Hans Wohl-Semuth, who makes all trade pacts. They accepted acknowledgment as "Honorary Aryans" by the persecutors of their race and live in friendship with them. Hitler's liberation of the Germans from the Jews has done only harm to Germany, but it must be a source of considerable satisfaction to the Germans.

This book, which refrains from relating atrocities, will describe one single incident, as yet unrecorded, and told to the author by two eyewitnesses who later managed to leave Germany.

A young Jew in Paris had assassinated Herr vom Rath, a member of the Paris Embassy, and as an act of political vengeance the Germans made the hour of his burial an occasion for a new pogrom against the Jews. As was the case in other camps the 10,000 Jews concentrated in Buchenwald were forced to stand for hours in military order. It was November 11, 1938, 11 A.M. In a long row S.A. men passed by these Jews, carrying the coffins of those who had "died" that morning. Then followed a procession of those wounded and blood-covered victims who had been almost whipped to death, each one kicked to his feet again by the soldiers when they collapsed in their march. All at once, one of them—a merchant of sixty-five years, whom the present author had known in his youth, and who had been brought to the camp only three days

before—terribly mutilated, pulled himself up, a tall man, and, in a last effort lifting his arms up toward his brothers, in a loud voice and in Hebrew pronounced the ancient Jewish blessing of his forefathers.

For some minutes the soldiers stood still, struck with a curious astonishment. Then they seized him, carried him off, and killed him that same day. The name of this Jew, which may not be told for the sake of his family, must be added to the list of those German martyrs that begins with Huss and will continue through the ages to come.

Despite their long history of submission, the Germans have never suffered such inroads on their ultimate liberties as during the past nine years. No one is left to work as he pleases, when he pleases, where he pleases, whether he be rich or poor, worker, farmer or doctor. The whole land resembles a huge barracks into which the six-year-old German is admitted, where he is trained, drilled, broken and held until the very funeral ceremonies are prescribed. For generations to come the concept of law has been undermined for eighty million men. Even if the Germans will lose in the end, their faith in brute force has been strengthened for generations. They learned nothing from their first defeat, stubbornly returning to their past ideals; how can they be expected to learn from a second defeat?

The deriding of sincere convictions, the contempt for law, the glorification of murder, the desecration of graves and houses of worship, the distrust of all against all, the spying on close friends, the denial of one's own father for reasons of race, the destruction of independent science, the enslavement of teachers and professors, the training for perverse brutalities, the stultification of womanhood; the surrender of all passion in favour of the State—all these must leave behind a generation that will face its contemporaries in other lands as strangers.

And what about the defamation of the German name throughout the world? This time no German will be able to say that he was coerced by the ruling class, for to-day everyone has his friends in the Party. The entire nation has undertaken or approved this devastation. The entire nation has accepted the axiom of its Minister of Justice: "That is right which serves Germany." These six words encompass the moral disaster that has befallen it.

Can the world forget all this? Can a man who lived through the Battle of London as a boy offer his hand to a German? Can a Norwegian ever again receive a German as a guest in his home? Where lives the Dutchman who can ever again do business with a German, with his mother and a hundred others machine-gunned by a German aeroplane?



And where is the country that will conclude a treaty with the Germans, who have expressly made the validity of treaties dependent on their advantage? And why should Hitler's successor be believed, since he will have learned the new morality as a boy and thus is bound to abide by it?

Hitler did not bring the Germans happiness, but they did not ask that. They do not seek liberty, nor wealth, nor even harmony and serenity of the mind. The ancient dream of world dominion, the ultimate rehabilitation sought in their mystic visions, the admiration of a world they for ever like to accuse like innocent and wronged children—this public recognition, sought and demanded by their inborn sense of insecurity, Hitler has brought to them, even though for but a while. Never did they have a leader who suited them better.

As a conqueror Hitler cannot be compared with his German predecessors. Around A.D. 800, 1000 and 1500 Charlemagne, Otto the Great, and Charles V had made Germany the strongest power in Europe. But their power was half-inherited; it came from the outside, or obliquely; it did not surge forth from within, nor did it last for more than a brief time. Hitler's triumphant march is better compared with the onslaughts of the Goths, the Mongols, the Normans—barbarians that fell upon the ancient cultures, subjugating them for a time, only to pass away, leaving little behind. Who still remembers the names of their leaders? Two or three have been carried across the ages on the wings of songs. Any analogy with Napoleon is preposterous—despite everything. Napoleon carried new ideals to the nations he conquered. Along the Rhine or in Italy he introduced laws and a social order that outlasted his expulsion because they were modern and just. True, in seeking to unify Europe he saw himself and France at the head, but on the basis of a great revolution that preached tolerance. Hitler conquered Paris on the basis of a doctrine that made the supremacy of his race the foundation of his rule.

Here the problem becomes involved. All the culture Germany could have brought to the conquered countries has been held down or beaten down by the Nazis. The German scholars and artists driven from their homes are a symbol of this state of affairs. This time the German spirit arrived in foreign lands in advance of German might, and it is compelled to flee farther and farther before that might. The flight of the best German minds from Germany to neighbouring countries, and after their conquest farther and farther away, to America—this will continue in song as the great symbol of this persecution, continue with the never-

ending gratitude of the emigrants. Thus the most intellectual city of the world could expect only barbarism when Prussian boots strode up to the monuments of the Tuileries. All those who meant Germany's fame in the world have been received by other nations as guests and refugees, not as conquerors. The entry of the German spirit through the Arc de Triomphe took place seven years before the entry of the German tanks, and to much greater applause.

The National-Socialist Party bears its dual name rightfully, for it is Socialist too. The rapid evolution that has led the world away from pure capitalism for the past twenty years has been accelerated in all countries through war economy; most of all in Germany, which has been based on a war economy for nine years. While the Fascist countries quickly adapted themselves to these modern upheavals, the wealthy continued to govern in the old way in the two great Western democracies. It was they who made possible Germany's rearmament, instead of crushing it. "Rather Hitler than Blum," said more than one French industrialist.

And yet, when fear of Bolshevism inspired the men of the Bank of England and the Bank of France to the Pact of Munich, their dreams deceived them. To-day financiers in Paris, Amsterdam and Budapest feel themselves coerced into a system that more and more closely resembles that of Moscow. When German and Italian capital had already been almost entirely confiscated by their Governments, the free democracies, while remaining faithful to their own financial system, evinced an almost obstinate patience with the Dictator States. Orthodox capitalism, in any event, has failed in Europe; and it is quite possible that we shall soon see Hitler in the guise of a Communist.

He is preparing the unification of Europe—a union sought by all as a federation rather than a Slave-state under the leadership of a master race, just as the best among the Germans always sought Austria's *Anschluss*, but not under Hitler's guns. The unification of Europe and the dethronement of half a dozen kings can only be useful to Europe. Even after the fall of Napoleon none of the more than hundred small German principalities he liquidated rose again. Many a prophet has attained ends he never sought. Hitler, like Columbus, will land on a continent he never sought. From the conquest of Europe by Hitler, the United States of Europe may very well arise, if in the end the swastika is struck and the White Flag of Liberty hoisted in its stead.

Neither forms nor dates can be predicted. One thing seems certain : the conquered peoples will not bend under the yoke as long as the Germans. The second World War can end only in revolution, just as the Russian Revolution gave the first World War its decisive turn. In harmony with the spirit of the times, however, the forms are likely to be social rather than national. Instead of a German Europe Hitler will find in the end a liberal one. In decisive contrast to the theory of race, the revolutions of the impending years will no longer arise over provinces and frontiers, but over a more just redistribution of wealth. History will record that as one consequence of this war the claim of every citizen to a decent livelihood became a demand in all countries. There is no "Holy Alliance" in the offing, as after the fall of Napoleon—nor can or should any new Talleyrand come again to power. The first thing the subjugated nations will seek to regain will be more liberty than they had before the War, not less.

Germany will be the last rather than the first—the German character, reflected in its history as here presented, guarantees that. Not until one of the enslaved nations will have risen, not until perhaps the first fraternization between armed German workers in uniform and unarmed non-German workers will have dissolved an unnatural servitude—not until then is there the prospect that certain German circles too will rise and overthrow in civil war the present régime to which they themselves in large part belong to-day. Even if Hitler should partly win the Russian war it may bring him corn, but no enthusiasm. Germans have often been anti-French, never anti-Russian, not even in the World War. On entering Moscow the soldiers would recognize the sources of much of Hitler's ideology ; they would fraternize with the followers of a discipline so similar to their own and might well become Communists.

The breakdown of the modern Genghiz-Khan is inevitable with the help of America, but cannot be attained by invasion, only by revolts in Europe. A powerful blockade would terrify the leaders more than the German people who are willing to stand privations for any length of time ; they can do without money and luxury. But nothing can make a more disastrous impression on the people than bomb attacks. The German character does not react like the English in hardening to distress and becoming stubborn. The Germans are more nervous by nature, and their nerves have been overstrained during the last ten years.

Armed and under command, as a soldier, the German keeps his courage, but as a target, attacked by invisible strangers, as a civilian

without orders and superiors, he easily succumbs. He has not seen an invasion of his country for one hundred and thirty years.

When the Anglo-Saxon blockade, revolts among the conquered nations, and bomb attacks inside Germany have reached a maximum, then the generals may be ripe to get rid of their "Führer" in order to save themselves. This will be a dangerous moment for the world, because Prussian generals are no more trustworthy than Hitler. The victors will have to look out for the "Unknown Prisoner" when he steps out from behind the barbed wires of the camp, and make their own terms with him.

The idea of disarming a beaten Germany alone, as was done at Versailles, shows incomprehension of the German character.

Since so efficient a people cannot be deprived of its rights in economic competition, the only method of living with them will lie in the founding of the United States of Europe, which will be much easier to create after a second German defeat than it was after the first. Only positive disarmament of all the nations of Europe can insure German disarmament too, without the possibility of revenge. There will be a Federal Army and a Federal Navy for Europe, as the United States defence forces to-day are directed from Washington. Germany will then no more be able to start a war than the State of California.

In this way alone can the poison fangs be drawn from the jaws of the Germans, can the great gifts of their spirit be given their rightful place in world culture, without fear of further warlike outbursts.

## 20

TO-DAY, on an autumn evening, an old man stands on the terrace of Heidelberg Castle, looking down into the valley. Behind him the red ruins loom into the dusk, symbols of German architecture, destroyed by a French conqueror, overgrown since then by three hundred years of dark-green ivy, and now a promontory of German romanticism. The history of the struggles between Germany and France is instinct in this symbol, set against Germany's loveliest spot.

The old man with the domed brow, a philosopher and musician like the best Germans, looks thoughtfully down to the river at his feet, its waters rushing serenely toward the three stone arches of the Old Bridge.

It is the River Neckar. Here it has become a broad stream, though just now, a bare mile upstream, it was forcing its narrow course through the mountains. How quickly the river became transformed, almost like Germany! Yonder the vineyards climb the hill in terraced array. That hill to the left of the Neckar is called the *Königstuhl*; over to the right, at half-height, runs the Philosopher's Path; again the two Germans sound in the names.

Looking over the walls, the philosopher sees below a square white building—the University, the oldest in Germany. It is more than five centuries and a half since the first teachers held forth there before their students. Since then a hundred splendid heads, the brows of true thinkers, have bent over their studies and experiments in the little houses between the vineyards or the old homes of the inner city—all for the sake of wisdom. Down there, in that narrow, crooked street, Bunsen explored the substance of the stars, and at last found the solar spectrum. At the same time, but a few blocks away, Helmholtz calculated the wavelengths of sound and light, and for the first time penetrated the hitherto closed sanctuary of the eye with his speculum.

Thoughtfully the mind of the old sage roves over the ancient roofs. Over there, where they come close together and some still exhibit varicoloured tiles, must have been the house where Luther met the humanists while the youthful, pale Melanchthōn stood by and worshipped the valiant monk. Here where the old one of the domed brow sat himself, the shadow of Goethe had fallen, for here Goethe's youthful heart had lived through its *Sturm und Drang*, when, filled with love and wanderlust, he hesitated between writing and action before he left his fatherland for the first time. Here he had sat again forty years later by the side of the exquisite Marianne, rejuvenated in her presence, picking up a chestnut and writing an immortal poem about it.

For here, in this southern corner of Germany, a few chestnuts do ripen—not many and only in sheltered spots, but just enough to fill a German with the ancient yearning for the South.

Far to the West, close to the setting sun, one can just make out the shadows of four towers—the old man, his eyes undimmed by study, can even discern the two domes. That is the Cathedral of Speyer and there, he knows, lie buried many German Emperors who, all of them, strove southward to the chestnuts. And now comes the moment when the setting sun illuminates the Rhine, into which the Neckar flows. Not far away from there lies the spot where Ariovistus answered Caesar

with the speech that introduces this book. It is almost as though German history were spreading away under the terrace of the old castle.

But now that the philosopher turns homeward—for it is growing chilly—he makes out a heap of rubble over in the newer eastern part of town. That was a British bomber that came flying recently to pay back the attack of the Germans in their week-long battle. Once British students sat there beneath the white dome, learning from the lips of German scholars many things they could not find at home—above all, the German language with its wondrous sound. Perhaps it was one of those students who had now come back.

—*Where are they?* the old man ponders, crushing his hat as though he fears his thoughts can be read beneath it. He strides toward his tiny, ancient room.—Where are they now, the times of German Humanism that flourished in this town from Luther to Goethe and Helmholtz? Where is the glory of the German name? Where the freedom of research? Where youth's thirst for learning? Where are the boats with their coloured lanterns, with the merry old student songs drifting up against the town and the hill? Over in the Cathedral the Emperors rest from their Roman pilgrimages that brought such fateful suffering to themselves and the Germans. Far away rest the reformers who centuries ago were permitted to speak what to-day is forbidden to their descendants. Deserted lie the laboratories, for youth has marched into far away lands to mow down alien peoples. In the libraries stand the works of Kant, handed down by the fathers, now unread and unloved, for he has nothing to say to this German age. Only the Rhine has remained the self-same stream as in Siegfried's times; and when the Germans dream, they hear the "Lorelei."

Night has broken over the old Neckar town, over Germany. The old man has come home—he gazes before him in resignation. Now he opens the piano and plays the last Sonata of Beethoven.

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